MASTER ROCKAFELLAR'S VOYAGE

by

W. CLARK RUSSELL

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MASTER ROCKAFELLAR'S VOYAGE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

MY DANISH SWEETHEART

HIS ISLAND PRINCESS

ABANDONED

[See page 175.]

"BE PLEASED TO GET IN AND GO AWAY."

MASTER ROCKAFELLAR'S VOYAGE

BY

W. CLARK RUSSELL

AUTHOR OF "MY DANISH SWEETHEART," ETC., ETC.

WITH 27 ILLUSTRATIONS BY GORDON BROWNE

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

HE BEGS TO GO TO SEA 1

CHAPTER II.

HIS FIRST DAY ON BOARD SHIP 17

CHAPTER III.

HE SAILS FROM GRAVESEND. 30

CHAPTER IV.

HE GOES ALOFT 45

CHAPTER V.

HE SIGHTS A SHIP 59

CHAPTER VI.

HE IS STRUCK BY LIGHTNING 74

CHAPTER VII.

HE HEARS A BELL 88

850582

PAGE

CHAPTER VIII.

HE SEES THE EQUATOR 103

CHAPTER IX.

HE SEES AN ICEBERG 209

CHAPTER X.

HE SIGHTS A WRECK 227

CHAPTER XI.

HE SEES A STRANGE LIGHT 243

CHAPTER XII.

HE ARRIVES HOME 259

MASTER ROCKAFELLAR'S VOYAGE

CHAPTER I.

HE BEGS TO GO TO SEA.

MY name is Thomas Rockafellar; father and mother always called me Tommy, and by that name was I known until I grew too old to be called by anything more familiar than Tom. I have seen people look at one another, and smile, perhaps, when they have heard the name Rockafellar mentioned as that of a family; but I here beg leave to state that the Rockafellars are an exceedingly ancient race, who, if they do not claim to have arrived in this country with William the Conqueror, can excuse themselves for not having landed with that chieftain by being able to prove that they had been many years established when the keels of the Norman galleys grounded on the Hastings shore.

Amongst my ancestors were several sailors, who had served the king or queen of their times in the navy of the state. A portrait of Ebenezer Rockafellar, who was a rear-admiral in the early years of George the Second's reign, hung in the dining-room at home, and represented a face like that of the man in the moon when the planet

EBENEZER ROCKAFELLAR.

rises very crimson out of the sea on a hot summer's evening. He had a tail on his back and a great copper speaking-trumpet under his arm and his forefinger, on which was a huge ring, rested upon a globe of the world. The artist had painted in a picture of a thunderstorm happening through a window, with the glimpse of a rough sea, and an old-fashioned ship like a castle

tumbling about in it resembling a toy Noah's ark tossing on the strong ripples of a pond.

It might have been my looking at this red-faced ancestor of mine, and admiring his speaking-trumpet, and the noble colour of weather which stained his face that first put it into my head to go to sea. I cannot say. Who can tell where little boys get their notions from? I would stand before that picture, and in my small way dream about the ocean, about sharks, tropic islands full of cocoa-nut trees, and monkeys, and parrots gorgeous as shapes of burnished gold; and I would dream also, all in my small way, of flying-fish like little lengths of pearl flashing out of the dark-blue brine on wings of gossamer, and elephants and ivory tusks, and of black men in turbans and robes glittering with jewels, like the dark velvet sky on a midsummer night; and so on, and so on, until there arose in me a passion to go to sea, and behold with my own little eyes the wonders of the world.

Father and mother tried hard to conquer my desire; and then, when they found I would still be a sailor, they pretended to consent, secretly meaning to weary me out, or to give me a good long chance of changing my views by delaying to take any steps to humour my wishes. At last, finding my mind to be wonderfully resolved, my father talked to my mother gravely about my

disposition for the sea—told her that when a boy exhibited a strong inclination for a walk, no matter of what nature if honest, he should not be baulked—that I might have the makings of another Captain Cook in me, or at all events of a Vancouver, and end my days as a great man.

"Besides, my dear," said he, "one voyage at least cannot harm him; it will fill his mind with new experiences, it will also test his sincerity; it will act as the strongest possible persuasion one way or the other. It will be cheaper too than a year of schooling, and more useful, I don't doubt. So, my dear, let us make up our minds to send him into the Merchant Service for one voyage."

However, it was some time before my mother consented. She would not very strongly have objected to the Royal Navy, she said, but she considered the Merchant Service too vulgar for a Rockafellar.

"Vulgar, my dear!" cried my father; "why, do you forget that your own Uncle Martin was in the service of the Honourable East India Company?"

"Ah but," she answered, "Uncle Martin was always a perfect gentleman, and even had he been a common sailor on board a barge, he would have carried himself with as much dignity and been as fully appreciated by people capable of distinguishing as if he had been an Admiral of the Blues."

"MY FATHER TALKED TO MY MOTHER."

"Of the Blue, I think it is," said my father.

"The Red is cock of the walk," said I, who had been listening to this conversation with much interest.

Well, it ended, after many talks, in my mother agreeing with my father that one voyage could do me no harm, and that if I returned as eager for the sea life as I now was, it might prove as good a calling for me as any other vocation that could be named. So after making certain inquiries, my father one day took me to London with him, to call upon a shipowner who lived close by Fenchurch Street. He had five vessels, three of them large ships, of which two had formerly been Indiamen, and the others were barques. They were all regular traders to Australia: that is to say, to the different ports of that colony, and one or more of them were always to be found in the East India Docks discharging the wool with which they returned home full of, or taking in merchandise for the outward passage.

The shipowner, Mr. Duncan, was a large, fat, cheerful man, "with a very knowing eye, and supposed to be already worth, my dear, about a million and a half," as I afterwards heard my father tell my mother. We passed through an office full of clerks into a little back room, where we were received by Mr. Duncan, who seemed delighted to make our acquaintance. He patted

me on the head, said that he was always fond of boys whose hair curled, declared that he could not remember ever having set eyes on a more likely sailorly-looking lad, promised me that I should become the captain of a ship if I worked hard, and then he and my father went to business.

The terms were a premium of sixty guineas for the first voyage, together with ten guineas for what was called mess-money; "and with regard to pocket money," said Mr. Duncan, "I should say if you give the captain enough to enable him to put half-a-crown a week into the lad's pocket whilst he's in harbour the boy will have more than he needs for simple enjoyment, and too little," said he, closing one eye, "for what Jack calls larks."

The name of the ship was the *Lady Violet*, and Mr. Duncan told us that she was commanded by Captain Tempest, who, notwithstanding his stormy name, was a gentleman-like person of a mild disposition, one of the best navigators out of the Port of London, and beloved by all who sailed with him.

"There is no flogging now, I think, sir, at sea? said my father.

"Oh dear no," cried Mr. Duncan, smiling all over his immense crimson face: "a barbarous practice, sir, very happily suppressed ages ago."

"How are boys punished," asked my father, "at sea when they deserve it?"

"Why, sir," answered Mr. Duncan, "the captain usually sends for them to his cabin, and lectures them paternally and tenderly. His admonitions rarely fail, but if there be great perversity, then possibly a little extra duty of a trifling kind is given to them. But there is very little naughtiness amongst boys at sea, sir! very little naughtiness indeed. Perhaps I should add, in *my* ships, where no bad language is allowed, where sobriety is strictly encouraged, and where even smoking is regarded as objectionable, though of course," added Mr. Duncan, drawing a deep breath that sounded like a sigh, "we do not prohibit it."

A good deal more to this effect passed between my father and Mr. Duncan, and then certain arrangements having been made, we took our leave.

The ship was to sail in three weeks; she lay in the East India Docks, and as she would not be hauling out of the gates until the afternoon, there was no need for me to present myself on board sooner than the morning of the day of her sailing.

My outfit was procured at a well-known marine establishment in Leadenhall Street. I very well recollect the pride with which I tried on a blue cloth jacket, embellished with brass buttons, and surveyed my appearance in a large pier-glass. I had never before been dressed in brass buttons, and felt, now that I was thus decorated, that I was a man indeed. Also the glittering badge of a sort

of wreath of gold, embracing a gorgeous little flag on the cap which the outfitter placed on my head, enchanted me. Indeed, I could not but think that the privilege of wearing so beautiful a decoration would be cheaply earned by years of exposure and hardship, not to mention shipwreck, and even famine and thirst in an open boat.

"It seems to me," said my father to the outfitter, "to judge by your list, that it is the practice of young gentlemen when they first go to sea to take a great number of shirts and fine duck trousers with them."

"They need all their fathers allow them, sir," said the outfitter, with a bow.

"Is it," asked my father, "that they must always appear very clean?"

"No, sir," answered the outfitter. "I regret to say that it is the habit of most young gentlemen when first they go to sea to swap their trousers and shirts with the baker for what is termed 'soft-tack.'"

"What is soft-tack?" said I.

"Bread, the likes of which we eat ashore," answered the outfitter.

"Don't they get the same at sea?" said I.

"No, young gentleman," answered the outfitter; "there's nothing but biscuit eaten at sea by sailors, and it's sometimes rather wormy. When it is so, soft-tack grows into a delicacy, compared with

which midshipmen's trousers and shirts count for nothing."

"I'd rather have a biscuit any day," said I, "than a slice of bread."

I thought the smile the outfitter bestowed upon me a rather singular one. My father looked pleased, and said to the outfitter, "Master Rockafellar will keep his clothes, I know."

"Not a doubt of it, sir," responded the outfitter, and forthwith proceeded to show us the oilskins, sou'wester, sea-boots, bars of marine soap, clasp-knife, and the other articles which were to form the contents of the brand-new white-wood sea-chest, with grummets for handles, and with a little shelf for "curios," and upon the lid of which my name, THOMAS ROCKAFELLAR, was to be painted in strong, large black letters.

I will pass over my parting with my mother and sisters and little brother. My uniform came down a week before I sailed, and my wearing of the clothes greatly helped to sustain my spirits, whilst they made me feel that I was a sailor, and must not betray any sort of weakness that might seem girlish. I tried hard not to cry as my mother strained me to her heart, and I said good-bye with dry eyes; but I broke down when I was in the railway carriage as the engine whistled, and the familiar scene of the station slipped away. My father, who was accompanying me to the ship, put

his hand upon mine, and said something in a low voice, that was, I think, a prayer to God that He would protect and bless and guard his boy, and then turned his face to the window, and when presently I peeped at him, I saw that he had been weeping too.

Ah, dear little friends! let us always love our father and mother, and be grateful to them. They suffer much for us when we are young, and when we are incapable of understanding their anxieties and griefs. Later on in life we find it all out ourselves, and it is as sweet as a blessing sent to us by them from heaven if we can remember that we were always good, and loving, and tender to them when we were little ones, and when they were alive to be made happy by our behaviour.

When I look back from the hour of my trotting into the docks at my father's side, down to the time when I felt the ship heaving and plunging under me upon the snappish curl of the Channel waters, all that happened takes so misty a character that it is like peering at objects through a fog. Everything, of course, was new to me, and all was startling in its way, confusing my little brains; and it was a sort of Wonderland also.

The docks were full of business, and movement and hurry; huge cranes were swiftly swinging out tons' weight of cargo from the holds of ships to the snorting accompaniment of steam machinery;

dockyard labourers were chorussing on the decks of the vessels, or bawling to one another on the quayside; the earth trembled to the passage of heavy waggons; and the ear was distracted by the shrill whistling and roaring puffing of locomotives. There were fellows aloft on the ships, dismantling them of their spars, and rigging, or bending sails, and sending up masts, and crossing-yards, and reeving gear for a fresh voyage.

It was a brilliant October morning, with a keen shrill wind that made even the dirty Thames water of the docks tremble into a diamond-bright flashing, and in this wind you seemed to taste the aromas of many countries—coffee, and spices, and fragrant produce, the mere flavour of which in the atmosphere sent the fancy roaming into hot and shining lands.

The *Lady Violet* still lay alongside the quay. I recollect thinking her an immense ship as we approached. Aloft she looked as heavy and massive as a man-of-war, with her large tops, her canvas rolled up on the yards, and all her sea-gear —a bewildering complication of ropes—in its place. She had a broad white band along her sides, upon which were painted black squares to imitate port-holes. She was an old-fashioned ship, as I know *now*—though then I saw but little difference between her and the rest of them that lay about. Her stern was square and very handsomely gilt;

there were large windows in it, and the sunlight flashing in them made the long white letters of her name stare out as though they were formed of silver. She had a handsome flag flying at the mainmast head, exactly like the one that I wore in the badge on my cap. The red ensign floated gaily at her peak, and at the fore-royalmast head the Blue Peter—signal for sailing—was rippling against the light azure of the sky.

My father seemed as much confused as I was by the bustle and novelty. He grasped my hand, and we stepped over a broad gangway bridge on to the ship's deck. Here was confusion indeed! all sorts of ropes' ends knocking about, men on deck shouting to men in the hold, pigs grunting, babies crying, cocks crowing, and hens cackling; steerage passengers bound out as emigrants wandering dejectedly about; unshorn, melancholy men in slouched hats, pale-faced women with hollow cheeks stained by recent tears, cowering under the break of the poop, aud gazing forlornly around them; and drunken sailors on the forecastle bawling out coarse joking farewells to friends ashore. We went up a ladder that conducted us to the upper-deck or poop, and I noticed that along the rails on either side were stowed a great number of bales of compressed hay as fodder for the sheep, which were bleating somewhere forward, and for a cow that was now and then giving vent

to a sullen roar, as though she were vexed at being imprisoned in a great box.

There were several midshipmen on the poop running about. They glanced at me out of the corner of their eyes as they passed. I could not but envy them, for they seemed quite at home, whilst here was I, trembling nervously by the side of my papa, staring up at the masts, and wondering if ever I should be made to creep up those great heights, and if so, what was to become of me when I had reached the top? There was no need, indeed, to glance at my buttons to know that I was a "first voyager." My wandering eyes and open mouth were assurance as strong as though I had been labelled "greenhorn." My father, stepping up to one of the midshipmen, asked if the captain was on board.

"I don't think he is," said the youngster.

"This is my son," said my father, "who has come to join the *Lady Violet.* Are there any formalities to go through—any book to be signed by him—we are rather at a loss?"

All too young as I was to be an observer, I could yet see a spirit of laughing mischief flash into the lad's brown handsome face, and I have no doubt that he would have told me to go forward and seek for the cook and report myself, or have started me on some other fool's errand of a like sort, but for a sunburnt man in a blue-cloth coat

coming up to us, and asking my father what he wanted; on which the midshipman slunk away and joined two other midshipmen, who, on his speaking to them, began to shake with laughter.

"No, there is nothing to be done, sir," said the weather-stained man in answer to my father's question. "I suppose your chest is aboard?" he exclaimed, looking at me. "Better go below and see that your kit's arrived. We shall be warping out in a few minutes."

"Are you one of the officers, sir," asked my father.

"I am the second mate, sir, and my name is Jones," answered the other.

My father was about to put some further questions to him, but just then Mr. Jones, bawling out "Right you are!" to some one who had called to him from some part of the ship or the shore, rushed away.

CHAPTER II.

HIS FIRST DAY ON BOARD SHIP.

"WELL, Tommy," said my father, "as the ship will soon be leaving I had better be off, as I do not want to go to Australia with you. God bless thee, my son. Be a good lad; do not forget your prayers; remember to write to us as often as you can send a letter"—and here his voice breaking, he ceased and stooped to kiss me; but I drew away. I did not like to be kissed by my father in the presence of the little bunch of midshipmen who were viewing us from near the wheel. I feared they would regard it as an unmanly act, and sneer at me afterwards as being girlish.

My father, with a sad smile, squeezed my hand and left me. Little boys are often very sensitive on points of what they consider manliness. They will laugh at this weakness when they grow older, but I think it is wise to humour them. I afterwards heard—but I did not then know—that my

father when he stepped ashore walked straight to the building that was then called the Brunswick Hotel, and posting himself at a window where I could not see him, sat watching me with the tears in his eyes, until the ship had hauled through the lock gates and I was no longer visible.

No one who has stood on board a large sailing ship for the first time, and witnessed the proceeding of getting her under way, will wonder at the confusion my mind was in as the *Lady Violet* hauled out into the river, and at my inability therefore to recollect all that passed, I took very little heed of my father's leaving the vessel. I stood lost in amazement, staring about me like a fool, my mouth wide open. I remember noticing the pier heads gliding past the ship as we warped out stern first; people standing on the quayside shouting to us, waving hats and handkerchiefs, some of them weeping; whilst our passengers in groups along the line of bulwarks responded to these farewells with kissing of hands, broken cries of "God bless you!" "Good-bye!" and the like. I remember the sharp shouts of the mate on the forecastle repeating the pilot's orders, the half-tipsy chorusing of seamen heaving at the capstan, the figure of a fellow at the helm revolving the spokes, first one way, then another, the manœuvring of a little snorting tug to receive the line for the hawser by which our great ship was to be towed down the river. Nobody

took any notice of me. I stood at the head of one of the poop ladders leaning against the rail, wondering at the swiftness with which the people on the pier heads, who continued to gesticulate towards us, were diminished into dwarf-like proportions.

Four or five midshipmen hung about the poop, but they seemed too busy with their thoughts, now that we were in the actual throes of leave-taking, and had started in earnest upon our long voyage, to favour me with their glances and grins.

The river was full of life—of barges and wherries, of dark-winged colliers, swarming along under full breasts of sail ; of Thames steamers cutting through the sparkling grey waters with knife-like stems ; of ships in tow like ourselves, bound up or down ; of huge majestic metal fabrics, gliding to their homes in the docks after days of thunderous passage through the great oceans, or floating regally past us on the way to the distant west or far more distant east.

I know not how long I had thus stood staring, when a big, broad-shouldered young fellow, with a face like a prize-fighter's, yet of a kindly expression, stepped up to me, and said, in a gruff, deep-sea note—

"Well, youngster, and who are you?"

"I am Master Rockafellar, sir," I answered.

"That's our livery you've got on," said he; "you're one of the midshipmen, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir," said I; "and are you a midshipman, please?"

"No," he answered; "I'm third mate. What's your name, again?"

"Master Rockafellar," said I.

"Ha!" he exclaimed; "the right sort of name to go to sea with. Every 'wave,' as one's grandmother calls it, would speak of itself as a 'rock-a-fellow.'" He burst into a mighty laugh, and then said kindly, "Well, well; I've heard of even queerer names than 'Rockafellar. Been below yet?"

"No, sir," said I.

"Haven't you seen your bedroom?"

"No, sir," I answered again.

"Well, take my advice," said he, "and jump below at once, and secure a bunk, and see that your chest is all right—I suppose you've brought one—or some of those 'tween-deck passengers down there will be borrowing your mattress and forgetting to return it, and rigging themselves out in your clothes."

"My chest is locked, sir," said I.

"And what of that?" he roared. "D'ye think there never was a handspike aboard a ship since the days of Nelson? Jump below, jump below, I tell ye!"

"Please, sir, which is the way?" said I, trembling.

"Go down those steps," said he, pointing to the poop ladder, "and just over against the cuddy front there's a black hole. Drop down it, for *that's* the way."

I at once stepped on to the maindeck, and saw a square aperture, which I was afterwards informed was called the "booby hatch." There was a little crowd of third-class passengers standing round it, looking very wretched and melancholy, two or three of the women holding babies, who cried incessantly.

I looked into the hatch; it seemed very dark beneath, and a close, most unpleasant, but quite indescribable smell rose up through it—a sort of atmosphere of onions, yellow soap, fumes of lamp-oil, the whole tinctured with a peculiar flavour of shipboard. A short flight of perpendicular steps fell to the bottom. I was too manly to ask my way of the women; so, perceiving a sailor coiling away a rope upon a pin near the main-shrouds, I went up to him, and said, "I want my bedroom; d'ye know where it is?"

He turned his eyes slowly on me, took a somewhat sneering survey of my buttons, spat a mouthful of tobacco-juice into a scupper-hole, and then said, whilst he proceeded with his work, "Better ask the capt'n."

The sailor was too grumpy and surly a man for a little boy like me to address a second time; so I

made my way to the hatch, and put my leg over into it, concluding that I should find somebody to tell me where my bedroom was when I had

"HE TURNED HIS EYES SLOWLY UPON ME."

descended. The ladder was perpendicular, and I was very slow in stepping down it.

"Now then!" bawled a powerful voice: "up or down; one ways or t'other. There ain't too much

light here; and who's bin and made *you* think you're made o' sheet glass?"

This remark, I found, was uttered by a seafaring man, one of the sailors of the ship, I afterwards came to know, who had been told off to help our handful of emigrants to secure their boxes. I think he was slightly in liquor; at all events, I grew sensible of a distinct taste of rum-and-water on the air as I jumped backwards on to the lower deck close beside him.

"Where is my bedroom?" said I.

No bedrooms at sea, young 'un," he answered. "What callin's yourn? Are 'ee a sailor man? My precious eyes! there's buttons! See here, my lively: when the shanks of them buttons is worn off, I'll give ye the value of a fardenswuth of silver spoons for the whole boiling of 'em."

"I promised my father not to sell my clothes," I answered, with dignity. "Where's my bedroom, I say?"

"Why, *there*," said he, pointing with a tar-stained stump of forefinger into the dusk. "Shut your eyes and walk straight, and your nose 'll steer ye the right course, I lay."

I spied a door to the right some little distance abaft the part of the deck that was pierced by the great mainmast, and making for it, entered, and found myself in a long narrow cabin fitted on either hand with a double row of bunks, or sleeping-

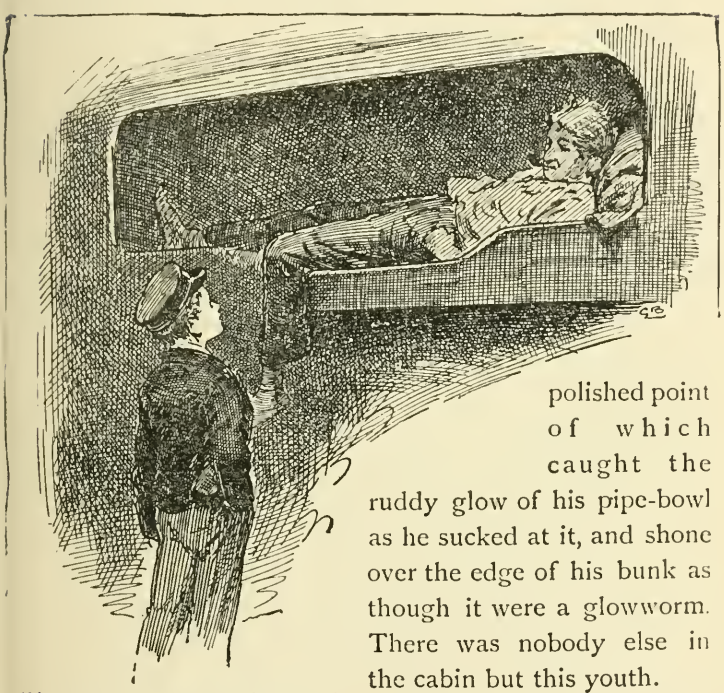
shelves, and lighted by three little round portholes, called "scuttles." Bright as the day was outside, in this cabin it was no better than twilight, and I hung for some moments in the doorway, scarcely able to distinguish objects.

When presently I could fairly use my sight I took notice of a thin slip of a table, penetrated by stanchions, up or down which it could be made to travel as space happened to be wanted. At the aftermost extremity athwart this interior were two or three shelves containing tin dishes, pannikins, coarse black-handled knives and forks, jars of pickles, red tins of preserved potatoes, and other such commodities: the produce, as I afterwards heard, of the amount which each midshipman had to subscribe in a sum of ten guineas to what was called "the mess"—and a mess it was!

Under these shelves stood a cask of flour, and another of exceedingly moist sugar, and an immense jar of vinegar. Here and there against the bulkhead partitions between the bunks hung a sou'wester or a coat of oilskin; whilst under the lower tier of bunks you caught a glimpse of the soles and heels of sea boots and shoes, with a thin canvas bag, perhaps, like a man's leg. In most of the bunks lay a heap of rude bedding, roughly-made mattresses, and stout blankets.

Immediately facing the door there was stretched, in one of the upper sleeping-shelves, a young red-

faced youth. He was in his shirt and trousers, and was smoking a short sooty clay pipe. He eyed me out of a pair of little black eyes, which winked drowsily on either side of his immense nose, the



"'IS THIS A BEDROOM?' SAID I."

polished point of which caught the ruddy glow of his pipe-bowl as he sucked at it, and shone over the edge of his bunk as though it were a glowworm. There was nobody else in the cabin but this youth.

"Is this a bedroom?" said I.

He expelled several mouthfuls of smoke before answering, and then exclaimed, "Yeth."

"Am I to sleep here, do you know?" said I.

"Can't thay," said he, lazily. "If you're a mid-

thipman, you do ; if you aint, you'll be kicked out." Saying which, he closed his eyes, and refused to answer other questions, though, by his continuing to smoke, I knew he had not fallen asleep.

I entered the cabin, and after peering a bit into the bunks, saw my bedding in one of the two sleeping-places which ran athwartships. At this point my memory grows misty again. I have some dim recollection of attempting to make my bed, of hunting about for the sheets—not then knowing that sailors do not use sheets at sea—of moodily getting into the bunk, and wishing that I was at home again ; of stretching myself, after a little, and falling asleep ; of being awakened by a hubbub of voices, and discovering that the berth was full of midshipmen—nine "young gentlemen" in all, including myself—who were sitting round the table, using the edge of their bunks for chairs, and drinking tea out of pannikins, and hacking at a lump of cold roast meat.

This, I say, I recollect ; also that I was invited by the third mate, who sat on a cask at the head of the table, to arise and join the others, and drink tea with them, which I did ; that the handsome young fellow whom my father had spoken to on the poop began with a grave face to ask me questions intended to raise a laugh at my expense, and that he was abruptly silenced by the third mate (whose name was Cock), who said to him, "See here, my lad :

this is your second voyage, and you are giving yourself airs on the strength of it. Now, what are your talents as a sailor? Could you put a ship about? Could you send a yard down? Could you take a star? D'ye know anything about stowing a hold? See here, my heart of oak!—until you've got some knowledge of your calling, don't you go and try and make a fool of a lad who comes fresh to it. Everybody's got to begin, and so I tell you; and if before six months of shipboard this young Master Rockafellar hasn't more seamanship in any one of his fingers than you've got in all your body, though this *is* your second year at sea, then you shall call me a Chinaman, without risk of earning a kick for the compliment."

The lad blushed to the roots of his hair, and looked subdued. He was a great powerful man was this third mate, and I seemed to feel with the instincts of a boy that no sort of bullying or mean sneaking tyranny was likely to be attempted so long as he made one of our company.

The tea was very strong, and the bottom of my pannikin was full of black leaves. The liquor had a flavour of old twigs and stale molasses; the beef was so hard that I could scarcely make my teeth meet in it, yet it was fresh, and it was not long before the salt food upon which we had to live made me think yearningly of it as a delicacy—as something for even a bite of which I would have gladly "swapped" a shirt.

All this while the ship was being towed down the river. I was still in the midshipman's cabin when there was a great noise on deck—voices of men shouting, sounds of feet running hastily—and on looking through one of the portholes I saw the houses of a town just abreast, and noticed that they moved slowly, and yet more slowly, until they came to a dead halt. We had come to a mooring-buoy, for the night, off Gravesend ; but one of the midshipmen told me that we should be underway again long before this side of the world was awake ; by which he meant that the tug would take us in tow at daybreak.

It was dark by this time. A boy who acted as our servant lighted a lamp that was shaped like a coffee-pot, with the end of the wick coming out of the spout. By this weak and fitful light the scene of the berth looked very strange to my young, inexperienced eyes. All the midshipmen were below, some smoking, some cutting up pipefuls from squares of black tobacco, jabbering loudly about the pleasures they had taken during three months ashore. The language was not of the choicest, and my young ears were frequently startled by terms and expressions which I had never before heard. The third mate sat with his legs over the edge of his bunk listening grimly.

"Well, young gentlemen," he presently roared out, "three of you are new to this ship this voyage,

but there are six of you who sailed in her last year, and when those six went ashore they were a deal more gentlemanly and careful in their language than I now find 'em. Where, pray, did you pick up these fine words? Not in your homes, I'll warrant. Now hearken to me, mates; you're not going to make the better sailors for employing language which you wouldn't tolerate in the mouth of any man, speaking in the presence of your mothers and sisters. You're in my charge understand, and since you come to me as young gentlemen, young gentlemen you shall be; so stand by and mind your words!" saying which he looked at them one after the other, directing an emphatic nod at each of the lads as he stared. After this I heard no more bad words, and if I except a slip or two, I may truthfully say that when the voyage had fairly commenced, and the lads had come well under the influence of Mr. Cock, there never was afloat a better spoken body of youths than those which occupied the midshipmen's berth aboard the *Lady Violet*.

CHAPTER III.

HE SAILS FROM GRAVESEND.

THE ship lay motionless as a rock on the smooth water off Gravesend; nevertheless, owing to the strong fumes of the tobacco, probably coupled with the close atmosphere of the berth, and its warm flavouring of lamp oil, water-proof clothes, pickled onions, and black tea, I felt somewhat sick and crept quietly out of the cabin, trusting that the fresh air on deck might revive me. Just outside our berth, in the open space of 'tween-decks, which was entered from above by means of the booby-hatch, were the emigrants' quarters. We carried about thirty of these poor people, and here they now were all of a jumble, using mine as well as the chests of the other midshipmen for seats and tables, the women talking vehemently, some of them still crying, here and there a man smoking in a sullen posture, others sitting over greasy packs of cards, whilst a few children played at hide-and-seek in

A SCENE IN THE EMIGRANTS' QUARTERS.

and out of the sleeping-places, and amongst the emigrant's bundles; three or four quite young babies meanwhile setting the whole picture to music with shrill, melancholy cries. A single lamp of the same pattern as ours illuminated this grimy grotesque scene.

I pushed my way on deck, but on my arrival found that it was raining hard, which accounted for the emigrants being crowded below. There was shelter to be had under the break of the poop, as the ledge of deck is called that overhangs the entrance to the cuddy; and there I stood awhile, gazing along the dark length of gleaming, streaming deck that was deserted, and listening to the complaining of the wind, amid the stirless shadow of the spars and rigging on high, or watching the damp and dusky winking of the lamps ashore, or of the lights of ships at anchor round about us. Ah! thought I, this is not so comfortable as being in my father's snug parlour at home, with a sweet and airy bedroom all to myself to pass the night in, and a kind mother at the fresh and fragrant breakfast table next morning to help me to a plateful of eggs and bacon, and a cup of fine aromatic coffee and cream! Maybe I shed a tear or two; I was but a little boy fresh from home, and amidst a great strange scene, with the darkness and the sobbing of the rain and the deserted deck, and the cold noise of the running waters of the river washing along

the ship's side to bitterly increase the sense of loneliness in my childish heart.

It was not long before I went below. Most of the midshipmen were turned in, that is to say, they were lying down in their clothes and shoes with nothing but their jackets removed. I thought I could not do better than follow their example and how wearied I was I could not have imagined till I put my head down upon the bolster at the end of my bunk, when I almost instantly fell asleep.

Being a very green, raw, quite young hand, I could be of no use on deck for the present, and it was for this reason, I suppose, they let me sleep in the morning, for when I woke I was the only midshipman in the cabin. There was a queer noise of scraping overhead, sounds as of the flinging down of coils of rope, the noises of water being swooshed along the planks; and the sunlight that shone through the portholes was tremulous with the play of glittering, moving waters. I went on deck and found the ship in tow of the tug, with the land a long way past Gravesend gliding astern, and the river so wide that over the bows it looked like the ocean. There were jibs and staysails hoisted, and the ship appeared to be sailing along. It was a fresh, windy morning; there were great white clouds rolling from off the distant land over our mastheads, and the dark brown smoke of the tug ahead fled in a wild scattering low down upon the

waters. The decks were being "washed down" as it is called at sea; sailors on legs naked to the knees were scrubbing and pounding away with brushes, buckets of water were being emptied over the planks, and a sturdy mariner with a whistle round his neck and great whiskers standing out from his cheeks, went about amongst the seamen, directing them in a voice that sounded like a roll of thunder. He was the boatswain. I was not a little surprised to find the midshipmen with scrubbing brushes in their hands washing down the poop. I mounted the ladder and stood a moment looking on. One of them worked a pump just before the mizzenmast, whilst another filled buckets at it, the third mate threw the water about, and the middies plied their brooms with the energy of a crossing-sweeper. The youth with a great nose who spoke with a lisp was polishing the brass-rail that ran athwartship in front of the poop. A man in a long coat and a tall rusty hat paced the deck alone. His face might have been carved out of a large piece of mottled soap. I afterwards found out that he was the pilot. There was another man standing near the wheel. He had a ginger-coloured beard that forked out from under his chin, pleasant dark-blue eyes and a copper-coloured face. It was not long before I discovered that he was Mr. Johnson, the chief officer. He came along in a pleasant way to where I stood staring.

"How is it you're not at work, youngster?" said he.

"I've just woke up," said I.

"Look here," said he, "if you don't call me sir, I shall have to call *you* sir, and I am sure it's easier for you to say it than for me. Pull your boots and stockings off like a man, put them in that coil of rope there upon the hencoop, tuck your trousers up, lay hold of that scrubbing brush yonder and see what sort of job you're going to make at whitening these decks."

In a minute I was scrubbing with the rest of them, and it made me feel as if I was on the Margate sands to be trotting about with bare feet, with the salt brine sparkling and flashing about my ankles.

My memory at this point grows dim again, for I was rapidly approaching the unpleasant experience of sea-sickness. I recollect that I helped to dry the decks with a swab that was so heavy I could scarcely flourish it, and that I was shown by the third mate how to coil away a rope over a pin, also that I dragged with the others upon some gear which caused a staysail between the mainmast and the mizzenmast to ascend; I then went below to breakfast, at which there was served up a dish of hissing brown steaks, each of them wide enough to have served as a garment for my young ribs. But by this time something of the weight of the wide sea beyond was in the river, the ship was faintly pitch-

ing, much too faintly perhaps to be taken notice of by anything but a delicate young stomach like mine. I felt that I was pale, and the sight of the heap of great brown steaks floating handsomely in grease, which took a caking of white, even as the eye watched, added not a little to the uncomfortable sensation that possessed me. The others plunged their knives and forks into the layers of meat and ate with avidity ; but for my part I could only look on.

"Take and turn in, my lad," said the third mate kindly ; "it's bound to occupy you a day or two to get rid of your longshore swash, and then we'll be having you jockeying the weather mizzen-topsail yard-arm, and bawling 'haul out to leeward' in a voice loud enough to be heard at Blackwall."

I was glad to take his advice, and was presently at my length in the bunk, too ill to speak, yet with a glimmering enough of mind in me to bitterly deplore that I had not heeded my mother's counsel and remained at home.

The wind hardened as the river widened, and much dismal creaking and groaning rose out of the hold and sides, the bulkheads, strong fastenings and freight of the lofty fabric as she went rolling stately in the wake of the tug that was thrashing through the hard green Channel ridges in a smother of foam. The wind was south-east, I heard some of our fellows say, with a lot of loose black scud flying

along the marble face of the sky, and a gloomy thickness to windward, that was promise of tough weather, ere we should have settled the South Foreland well down upon the quarter. One of the lads said that if the wind headed us yet more, we should bring up in the Downs, and lie there till it blew a fair breeze, which might signify a fortnight's waiting.

"If so," says he, "I shall put on a clean shirt and go straight ashore, then button my ears behind me, and never stop running till I get to London town; for twenty miles of salt water's enough for me; and here we are bound away for six thousand leagues of it, with all the way back again on top!"

In this fashion the lads would talk as they came below from the deck, and sick as I was I managed to heed enough of their conversation to pick up what was going forward. I cannot express how I envied their freedom from sea-sickness. Some were making their third voyage, others their second. I was the only "first-voyager" as they call it. It sometimes rained on deck, and the fellows would come below gleaming in oilskins, the sight of which made me feel pitifully girlish, insomuch that on three several occasions I made a desperate effort to get up and act my part of a sailor as they did theirs; but the oppression of nausea was too violent, and down I lay again, saving the third time when, contriving to feel my feet, the ship at the instant

gave a lurch which sent me headlong into one of the fore and aft bunks where I lay half stunned, and so miserably sick that the third mate had to lift me in his arms to enable me to return to my own bed.

Sea-nausea is at all times distressing, and I do not know that one is easier for suffering in a fine saloon, with looking-glasses and flowers and the electric-light, and the fresh breezes of heaven blowing through the open skylights to keep the place sweet. But if this *mal de mer*, as the French call it, is more unendurable in one interior than in another it must be so I think in a midshipmen's berth—at least such a berth as ours was:—Twelve sleeping shelves and nine lads to sleep in them, with a huge giant of a third mate to fill the tenth; a sort of twilight draining in through the three scuttles, the immensely thick glass of which was often eclipsed by the roaring wash of a green sea sweeping along the sides; a lamp burning night and day, from whose untrimmed flame there arose to the ceiling of the cabin a pestilential coil of smoke.

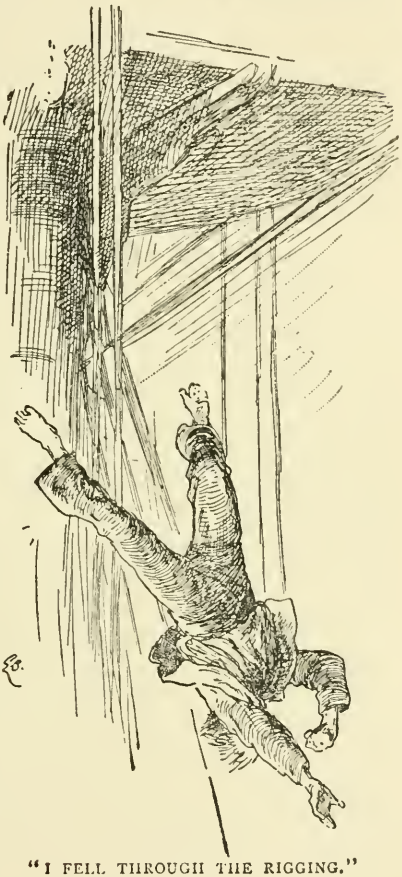
In these narrow gloomy quarters we lived and moved, and had our being. Here we ate our meals, here we slept, here we washed ourselves, here the youngsters smoked. Hardest part of all were the confusing noises made by the emigrants just outside our berth. Unlashed chests slided to and fro;

children were incessantly falling down and squealing; many heart-disturbing lamentations arose from such of the poor wretches as lay sick and helpless in their dark bulkheaded compartments. They had to fetch their meals from the galley, and not yet having acquired the art of walking on a tumbling deck, those who had to bring the rations of beef or pork along, would repeatedly come with a run through the booby-hatch, and lie at the bottom of the ladder badly scalded in a little lake of pease-soup, or with the beef rolling away among the chests, whilst the air resounded with execrations, scarcely stifled by the complaining sounds of the ship's fabric.

The third mate was very kind to me; told me there was no hurry; I was welcome to lie in my bunk till I felt equal to coming on deck.

"I was sick for a fortnight when I first went to sea," I heard him say. "I was one of four apprentices. Those shipmates of mine were brutes, and the very first night we were out they hauled me from my hammock and ran me to the mizzen shrouds, up which they forced me to go, saying that the topgallant sail would be clewing up shortly, and I must be in the cross-trees in readiness to help furl it. A ratline carried away, and I fell through the rigging on to the deck. I broke no bones, but I lay senseless, which so terrified the young bullies that when I was taken to my ham-

mock they never more offered to trouble me. I was ill for a fortnight, I say, and the memory of it makes me sorry for every youngster when he first comes to the life and is seasick."



"I FELL THROUGH THE RIGGING."

However, on the morning of the third day from our quitting Gravesend, though I was still very ill, I could stand no longer the miseries of my confinement to the cabin. Since I was bound to suffer, I thought it was better to feel wretched in the open air than amid the smells and noise and gloom of the midshipmen's berth.

It was the forenoon watch, as the hours from

eight to twelve are called. The fellows who had been on deck since four o'clock had come below at eight bells, and after breakfasting had turned in to smoke a pipe and then get some sleep. They were in the port or chief mate's watch, to which division of the ship's company I was supposed to belong, though I don't remember how I came to know this. We were still in "soundings" as it is termed—that is to say, not yet out of the Channel, though we were a long way down it.

On this morning there was a strong sea running on the bow, but not so much wind as the motion of the ship would have led one to suppose. The mids, when they came below, had told the others who were to relieve them that the vessel was under all plain sail saving the flying jib and fore and mizzen royals, and that the "old man" as they termed the captain, was driving her; that they had heard the mate say that he expected it would be an "all hands" job before four bells had gone—ten o'clock. I caught all this, scarce comprehending it, and lay drowsily and stupidly watching the lads get their breakfast and then vault into their bunks with all their clothes on—"all standing" as the sea saying is—ready to rush on deck to the first summons. The ship was lying over at a sharp angle, and there was a great roaring and seething along her sides of swollen waters smitten into yeast, and the cabin portholes came and went like the winking of eyes

to the shrouding of the glass by the liftings and leapings of the green billows. Presently there were certain sounds on deck which unmistakably denoted that sail was being shortened.

"It's 'in main royal' now, I suppose," said one of the middies, sleepily, "and about time too. What's the hurry all this side of Sydney, New South Wales?"

Presently more hoarse songs resounded on deck, along with the echo of tramping feet and of rigging dropped hastily from the hand.

"Old man'th growing alarmed, I reckon!" exclaimed the lisping long-nosed midshipman, whose name was Kennet. "Oh, how I do with," he cried, feigning to speak in a voice as though he wept, "that I had thtoptht at home to bottle vinegar for my poor deah mamma. Eh, Rockafellar? Better to bottle vinegar athore, my beauty, than to lie thick and hungry in a nathty cabin."

As he spoke, the third mate's voice was to be heard ringing like the roar of a bull down through the booby-hatch—"All hands reef topsails! Up you come, all you young gentlemen bee-low there! Lively, now! before the ship falls overboard!"

The youngsters sprang from their bunks, and were out of the cabin in a breath. Then it was that I made up my mind to linger no longer seasick in this dismal, straining cabin. I pulled on my shoes, plunged into my jacket, and, setting my cap

firmly upon my head, went clawing my way to the steps of the hatch, up which I staggered, feeling exceedingly ill and weak, but determined now to push on even to perishing sooner than suffer in darkness and loneliness below.

CHAPTER IV.

HE GOES ALOFT.

TALK of the confusion of hauling the ship out of dock! Here was uproar thrice confounded with a vengeance! The ship seemed to be almost on her beam ends; there was an ugly livid squall over the trucks and howling through the masts; they had put the helm up to ease off the weight of the first outfly, and the *Lady Violet* was thrashing and foaming through it with the spume blowing in snowstorms over her forecastle; all three topsail yards were on the caps, and the huge sails—for we carried single topsails—were blowing out like giant bladders in the grip of their gear. The outer jib was slatting on the jibboom; the clewed-up main topgallant-sail was making its mast up there whip to and fro like the end of an angler's rod; the immense mainsail was thundering at its clews and sides and slowly rose to the yard to the drag of the sailors, who were roaring out at the ropes which

belonged to it; the captain, standing near the wheel, was shouting out orders to the mate; the mate was bellowing to the second mate, who was forward; the second mate was vociferating to the boatswain; in all directions gangs of sailors were delivering their working choruses at the top of their lungs. The wind shrieked, the rain hissed through it like volleys of small shot; the shaking of the loose canvas on high might have passed for the discharge of the batteries of a frigate; the foam flew over the ship; the water washed in angry sobs along the scuppers. Preserve us!

To such a greenhorn as I was then, very young, very sick, with consternation and astonishment working in me like a passion, there was distraction and uproar enough here to have justified me in concluding that the end of all things was at hand.

In a few moments I found myself on the poop where the midshipmen were hard at work with the reef tackle and other gear preparing the mizzen topsail for reefing, snugging the spanker, and so forth. Their station was aft, and their duty lay in attending to all the sails on the mizzen-mast under the charge of the third mate. He was swinging off upon a rope, when he caught sight of me.

"Come along! come along!" he roared. "All the beef we can get is wanted here!"

I went in a staggering run to where the group were pulling and laid hold of the rope.

"Belay!" shouted the third mate, and sprang into the weather mizzen rigging, whither he was followed by the rest of the midshipmen. For a moment I hung in the wind, sending one thirsty, dizzy look aloft. "Well, now or never!" thought I; and with that I got on to the hen-coop, swung myself into the rigging, and began the ascent.

"I SEEMED TO BE PINNED TO THE RATLINES."

The wind came so hard that I seemed to be pinned to the ratlines, and I felt as though all the breath were blown out of my body. I sent a yearning look up, and saw the third mate on the weather mizzen-top-sail yard-arm, striding the spar

as though it were a horse, his muscular legs dangling between the dark heavens and the wool-white water. The lads were sliding out upon the foot-ropes, some to windward, some to leeward. I tried to make haste, but the sweep of the blast reduced my struggles to a mere crawling. It took me a full five minutes to reach to the height of the futtock shrouds—thin bars of iron which stretch at a sharp angle from the masts to the rim of the platform called "the top." I took these irons in my little hands, but lacked the courage to swing myself by them over into the top. How on earth, then, was I to gain the yard upon which the midshipmen were working? Through the irons I spied a hole in the platform, and with great trouble and a deal of trembling I contrived to squeeze through it, and then I found myself on a sort of stage with the ship looking as if she were a mile below me, and the mizzen-royal yard as if it were two miles above me.

The wind screamed frantically in my ears, yet not so loudly but that I could hear my small heart thumping in them. I clutched a rope, and stood staring wildly at the yard on which my shipmates were knotting the reef-points. I thought Mr. Cock a much more wonderful man than Blondin or any tight-rope walker that ever I had heard of, to be able to sit upon that rocking point of spar without tumbling off, and to be passing the earing as coolly as if he were tying his shoes.

"Stop where you are!" he bawled to me; "we'll endeavour to manage without you this once."

The sea looked five times bigger than ever I had before seen it. The worst of the squall was over, and past the edge of the flying gloom to windward there was a sort of faintness in the sky, with curls and wisps of scud blowing up it out of the hard green of the distant water that looked calm, so far away it was; and right out in the midst of the distant ocean, over which the dim light of the sky was breaking, I saw a ship, like a toy, vanishing and reappearing amongst the surges, flinging the foam away from her in bursts of steam-light cloud; and so little did she look with her three milk-white bands of topsails and marble-like round of foresail, that whilst my eye dwelt upon her, I could scarce persuade myself that she was real: rather, indeed, some craft of fairy-land, which a great strong fellow, such a man as Mr. Cock for instance, might be able to hold in the hollow of his hand.

I was at no great height, yet the captain looked an insignificant little creature as he stood at the rail sending his gaze aloft; the man at the wheel resembled one of those dolls which you purchase as sailors for your model boat, and the decks of the ship from poop to forecastle showed like a long wet plank. It was wonderful to think so narrow a base should support the tall, wide-spreading fabric of mast, yard, and gear that was now somewhat

nakedly shearing through the dusk of the squall, to the plunging and long floating rushes of the hull over whose side a sea would now and again fling a head of water that swept with the sparkle of a fountain clear into the milk-white race to leeward.

"Two reefs, Mr. Cock!" bawled the mate from the foremost end of the poop.

I watched the lads swinging in a row upon the foot-ropes, tossing up their heels as they brought the reef-points upon the yard, and wondered how long it would take me to learn their trick of working aloft, as coolly as though they toiled with the solid earth under them. All three topsails were being reefed at the same time. I could not see forward, but I could hear the voices of the men chorusing as they, lighted, the sails over. Evidently the captain expected dirty weather; and, to be sure, out abeam it looked ugly enough, with a kind of rusty light growing in the atmosphere that threw a malevolent complexion of storm upon the sky.

Presently the last knot had been tied in the mizzen topsail, and the midshipmen were in the act of descending.

"Jump aloft two of you and secure that t'gallants'l before it blows adrift!" roared the captain.

A couple of the mids sprang into the topmast rigging, and in a few moments were giving battle to the sail, that, even as the captain called, began to flog upon the yard.

Well, thought I, as I stood staring up at them, some day I dare say I shall be able to do that too; but I declare the possibility seemed mighty remote from me just then. Indeed, once again I was beginning to feel horribly sea-sick. The higher you mount above the hull of a ship, the wilder of course grows the rolling, and the mizzen-top in which I stood seemed to me to swing through the air a score of times more furiously than the decks below were swaying. It increased my nausea moreover to look up and see the two youngsters dizzily whirling under the dark sky, plunging and hauling at the thrashing sail, as though the hold they had with their boots was enough to save their lives if they fell backwards.

But now the others were swarming into the top, and swinging themselves over into the lower rigging, and dancing down the shrouds till, taut as those huge ropes were, they leapt again.

"Come along! come along!" bawled the third mate, as he plumped like a cannon ball alongside of me, and with a sinewy arm poised himself an instant before putting his foot on the futtock ratlines: "There's nothing good enough to look at up here, to keep you staring open mouth as though you were a newly landed cod. Lay down smartly now, youngster, and tail on to the topsail halliards."

His prize-fighter's face vanished over the rim of the top.

"*Lay down!*" thought I, "what does he mean?" and I went nervously to the edge of the platform to ask him to explain himself, but saw that he was already on deck.

"Mizzen-top there!" cried the captain, "Lay down, will you?"

There can be no mistake about *that*, thought I. I am not deaf. Twice I had been told to *lay down*; and with that I stretched myself along on my back, taking care however to keep a hearty good hold of some ropes which passed through the top within reach of my grasp.

"Mizzen-top there!" after a little came a roaring hail from the mate; "what are you about up there, sir? Do you mean to lay down or not?"

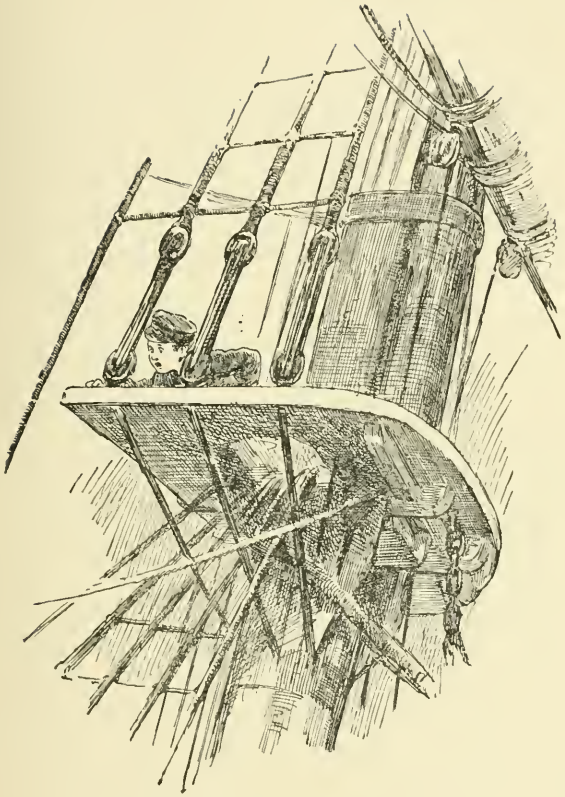
On hearing this, I crept on my knees to the rim of the top, and looking over, cried out in the shrill voice of my childhood, "Please, sir, I *am* lying down."

The captain was staring up at me, but on hearing this, he turned his back with a shake of his figure.

"Come down, Master Rockafellar," sung out the mate in a voice full of laughter.

When I heard this I crawled over to another edge of the top where I could see him, and piped out, "The captain said I was to *lay* down, sir."

It was wonderful that my thin voice should have carried in such a wind, yet I was heard plainly enough. Then arose a shout of laughter from the



"'PLEASE, SIR, I *AM* LYING DOWN.'"

midshipmen; the mate called something to Mr. Cock, who in a trice came bundling up the mizzen rigging, and flounded with a crimson face into the top.

"Why you young guinea pig, why don't you obey orders?" he bawled; "to *lay down* at sea means to *come* down, and you *know* it too; I see it in your eye! Over with'ee, over with'ee."

His large nervous fist closed upon the collar of my jacket, and I found myself lifted over the rim at the top.

"Catch hold of the futtock shrouds!" he roared, "those iron bars, d'ye hear?—quick, before I let you go!"

I gripped at something, but whether it was iron or rope I was too horrified to know. He let go, and my legs swung out into the air. But greenhorns cling too tightly to be in much danger on such occasions as this. A heave of the ship swung me in again, my toes struck something hard, and with the swiftness of a monkey I coiled my little shanks round it. Down I slid, breathless, and with the eyes half out of my head, and was not a little astonished and rejoiced to find my foot upon a ratlin in the mizzen rigging, whence the descent was as easy as walking the deck.

"That's your lesson," exclained the third mate as he jogged down the rigging past me. "You'll never shirk the futtock shrouds again, will you?"

But I had no breath with which to answer him. It was a rough lesson, but it did me good. It made me see that climbing and descending were no such terrifying processes as they looked. Possibly I might not have got so much confidence out of this adventure had I known that the third mate had only pretended to let go; that in reality he was maintaining his hold of my collar after my legs had swung out, though I was too much terrified to be sensible of this.

I have always considered that the alarm of this little business cured me of sea-sickness. Whilst in the top, as I have told you, the nausea was overpoweringly strong upon me; but when I had come down I was no longer sensible of it, and from that moment, indeed, I never had a return of it. There can be no doubt that this distressing malady lies mainly in the nerves, and the fright I had received by being hung out over the top, so to speak, had acted upon me as an electric shock, healing and ending the prostrating complaint.

It blew a gale of wind for three days. I don't doubt I should have heard a deal about my adventure aloft from the midshipmen but for the weather. The wet on deck and the discomforts below were too much for the youngsters' spirits, and until the sun shone forth again we were a very sulky lot. The ship was miserably uncomfortable. It rained incessantly, with such a continuous blowing of spray

over us, that it was sometimes above one's ankles on the main deck. There were tarpaulins over the hatchways, and the 'tween-decks were as dark as the hold. There had been no time yet for the passengers to grow seasoned to the sea life; most of those in the "cuddy," as the saloon was then called, kept their cabins. Now and again one of them at long intervals crawled into the companion-hatch, where he exhibited a face white as a spectre's.

But the chief of the misery was amongst the emigrants. Boxes and chests were incessantly breaking loose, and menacing their lives as the poor creatures sat huddled in sea-sick groups under the booby-hatch, for the sake of the dim light that sifted down through it. There were times when the galley fire was washed out, and the emigrants had to content themselves with biscuit and molasses and cold water, and small doses of that nauseous food called "soup and boulli," nick-named by the sailors *soap and bullion.* I have seen a little family of them squatting round a sea-chest belonging to one of us midshipmen, an old towel for a table-cloth, and on it a tin dish or two containing hard ship's biscuit, a mess of soup and boulli, a lump of pork fat, probably two or three days' old, along with other such cold and throttling fare as the ship's third-class larder yielded; and while they were attempting to make a meal off this trough-like collection of victuals, I have seen the chest slip

away from them, the food tumble on to the deck, and the whole family capsized on their backs.

I do not know that the emigrant in these days is a person very carefully and hospitably looked after at sea; but in my time the treatment he met with on shipboard—that is to say, the utter indifference to his comfort exhibited by owners and captains—rendered him the most miserable wretch afloat.

CHAPTER V.

HE SIGHTS A SHIP.

THESE three days of storm brought me into a tolerably close acquaintance with some of the hardships of the sailor's life. Our cabin did not leak, yet somehow or other the deck of it was always damp, with a noise as of the bubbling of water under the bunks. The scuttles were incessantly under water, and all the light we had was imparted by the dingy flare of our malodorous coffee-pot-shaped lamp.

The food was perhaps the hardest part to my young stomach. Every midshipman's father had been called upon to pay ten guineas mess money; yet I do not know that this ninety guineas obtained any stores for us, if it were not a cask or two of flour, a cask of sugar, a few dozens of pickles, and some cases of "preserved spuds," as potatoes are called at sea. We were therefore thrown upon the ship's stores, and fed as the sailors forward did. This I say was the hardest part to me, since, though

my sickness had passed, my appetite had not recovered its old strength, and for a long time I was never hungry enough to eat with the least relish the greenish masses of salt pork, and the iron-hearted rounds and squares and cubes of salt horse, and the pans of lukewarm slush-flavoured water, at the bottom of which rolled a handful of peas, as digestible as musket-balls, and the dark-skinned puddings, compounded of the coarsest flour and the skimmings of the greasy water of the cook's copper, which the lad who waited upon us would come staggering with from the galley, and place upon the narrow slip of table, scarce visible in our twilight.

I believe I should have starved but for the biscuit, which was crisp and good, though Kennet, the long-nosed midshipman, endeavoured to cheer me by saying—

"Thtoph a bit, Rockafellah—wait till we're a fortnight out, and then ththand by! They'll be broaching the regular provithionth then, and if there don't go a thcore of wormth to every chap'th bithcuith I'm a lobthter."

The crying of children outside, the growling of men, and the shrill complaining of women combined with the crazy creaking and groaning of the fabric, so that it was very hard to get any sleep.

It was on the night of the day of my adventure in the mizzen-top that I stood my first watch. It

was eight o'clock in the evening, and the moment after the last of the chimes of the bell on deck had been swept away by the gale, the four midshipmen who were in the starboard, or second mate's watch, came bundling below. Their oilskins were streaming wet, and they blew upon their fingers'-ends as they entered the berth.

"Still raining, is it?" asked a fellow named Poole.

"Ay, murderously," was the answer; "but the wind's quartering us, and you'll be making sail, I allow, before we turn out."

"What's been doing?"

"Nothing. But talk of the Bay of Biscay! Why, the Straits of Magellan might be close aboard. That's right, my sweet and lively hearty! On with your boots, my noble fellow! One, two, buckle my shoe; three, four, open the door; five, six, cut all your sticks!"

And the youth who had thus spoken, and whose closing observations were levelled at me, thrust a short black length of clay pipe into the flame of the lamp, and sprang into his bed to refresh himself with a smoke before going to sleep.

I got into my sea-boots, which were very new and creaked noisily, wrapped my body in an oiled coat, wedged a sou'wester securely upon my little head, and followed the others on deck. The night seemed very black after the lamplight, dim as *it*

was, in the cabin. It was the darker at that moment for a heavy squall of rain that was blowing with a note of shrieking in it over the bulwark rail, and splitting in shouts and whistlings through the masts and rigging. I clambered on to the poop, and stood holding on to the brass rail staring about me in a blind way, for there was a deal to daze a raw-head like me coming new to the scene, I assure you. The ship was tearing through the water under three-reefed topsails and foresail. She made a great swirling and roaring of white water all round her, and the snow of it put an illumination into the black air till you seemed able to see a mile away. There was a high sea running, but it had quartered us along with the wind, and the *Lady Violet* sank and rose very nobly and easily upon the long black seething coils of brine which chased her thundering to her counter, and expiring there in foam.

The other midshipmen hung about the quarter-deck, under the shelter of the break of the poop. Now and again they showed themselves, but at long intervals. The shadowy figure of the chief mate paced the weather-deck. Through the glass of the skylights I could see the people sitting in the cuddy below. Some played at chess or cards; others lolled in a sickly posture upon sofas; the captain, with his face burnished by weather, conversed with two ladies; a small chart lay before him, and he

was explaining something to them, running his forefinger over the paper, and smiling into their puzzled faces. It was more like a fancy than a reality to witness that shining interior set in the black frame of the night—that handsome cuddy, with its soft carpets, its brilliant lamps, its gleaming swinging trays, its globes of gold fish, its ferns and richly-painted panels, in which the lustre of the oil flames rippled ; the whole showing, as it were, like a picture flung by some magic-lantern upon an atmosphere of sooty blackness.

I crept aft, and stood looking a little while at the man that steered. The light in the binnacle touched his face and figure, and threw him into relief. His sou'wester came low over his brow, and the rest of him, saving a knob of a nose and a pair of cheeks compounded of warts, freckles, and wrinkles, was formed of an oilskin coat, oiled leggings, and huge sea-boots. He grasped the wheel with hands of iron, often bending a reddish glittering eye upon the compass-card that swung in the bowl, and I watched him thrusting the spokes first a little way up and then a little way down, and wondered why he did not keep the wheel steady. But I did not like to speak to him, for what little of his face was visible looked very sour ; and then, again, I was certain that he must be in a bad temper, through having to stand exposed to the lashing wet and strong cold wind of the night.

I went to the taffrail, and looked down over the stern of the ship at the frothing cataract of water that boiled out from round about her rudder, and streamed away pale and paler yet into the darkness, where I could see the dim line of it rising and falling upon the black surges. It resembled a footpath passing over a hilly country. The ocean looked a dreadfully desolate immense surface in that darkness, wider than the sky, it seemed to me, for the reason of the fancy of prodigious measureless distance coming to one out of the obscurity that lay in ink upon it, with the fitful flashings of the heads of seas showing in the heart of the murkiness. I shuddered as I thought how cold a death drowning must be. I shuddered again at the imagination of being alone in an open boat upon the vast surface of weltering gloom. I recalled what I had read of the sufferings of shipwrecked people, of fire at sea, of leaks which gained upon the pumps and sunk the vessel deeper and deeper, of sudden fierce storms which tore the masts out of ships, and left them helpless as logs of wood to slowly drown.

Whilst my little brains were thus busy, my eye was taken by what appeared to be a sort of smudge far away astern in the windy shadow of the night. If I looked straight at it, it vanished, but on gazing a little away from it I could see it very clearly. I continued to peer for some time, and was quite sure that the blotch—whatever it might be—was hard-

"'WHAT D' YE SEE, MY LAD?' SAID HE."

ening, so to speak, and enlarging. I turned my head to see if the mate observed it, but was sure he had not by his manner of walking the deck. I stepped up to him, and said:

"If you please, sir, I think there's something catching us up out there!" and I levelled my small arm at the ocean over the stern.

"Why, what d' ye see, my lad?" said he, very kindly; "you must have gimblet-like eyes to be able to bore a hole into such a night as this. It's Master Rockafellar, isn't it?" stooping to get a sight of my face. "Overtaking us, do you say?"

He walked right aft, I following him, and stood staring a moment or two, then with a start cried, "By George, the *Flying Dutchman*, I do believe! A big ship coming through the air it looks, and overhauling us as though she were a roll of smoke. Jump below, my lad, and fetch me my night-glass."

He told me where his cabin was, and where I should find the glass, and off I rushed, proud to be employed. His cabin window overlooked the quarter-deck, and against the bulkhead the four middies of our watch were grouped, smoking and yarning in the shelter there.

"Why, what are you up to?" shouted one of them; "that's the chief mate's cabin. He'll hang you up by the neck at that yard-arm, you young Rockafellar, if he catches you in his berth."

"He has sent me for his night-glass," answered; "there is a big ship coming up astern."

"O-ho!" cried they, and emptying the bowls of their pipes, they fled like startled deer on to the poop.

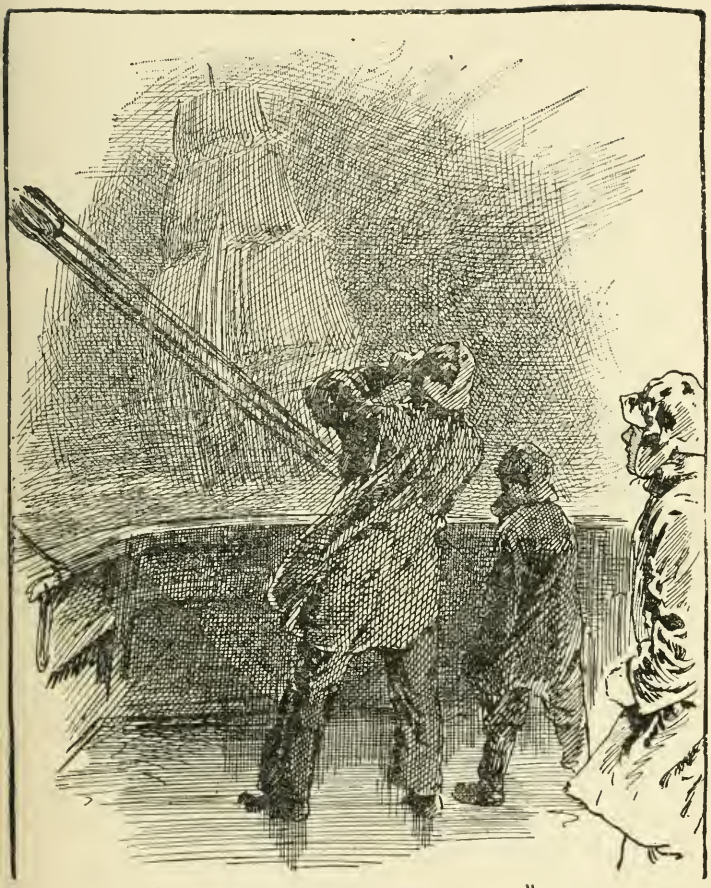
I found the glass—a binocular—and ran with all my might with it to the mate, who, as he took it from me, said, "That's right. You're a smart boy!" a piece of commendation which so inspirited me that, I believe, had he told me to go up to the main-royal-yard, I should have promptly and comfortably have made my way to that great height.

The sight I had been the first to descry was, indeed, well worth watching. The speed of our own ship through the water, though she was under very small canvas, could not have been less than nine knots in the hour, yet the vessel astern grew upon us as though we were in tow of one of our own quarter-boats, and scarcely moving. She showed pale as the watery moon dimly glancing through a body of vapour.

"She is dead in our wake," the chief mate said, as though talking to himself. "Does she see us, I wonder? Heavens alive! what is she under—*skysails* can it be? It's enough to make one think oneself in a dream."

I saw him send a glance towards the companion-hatch, as though he had a mind to call the captain.

"Here, one of you," he shouted to the midship-



"THE VESSEL ASTERN GREW UPON US."

men, who were grouped on the other side of the wheel, staring with all their eyes at the approaching ship, "whip that binnacle lamp out and show it."

Kennet sprang to the compass-stand, unshipped the light, vaulted on to the grating, and there stood holding, at the height of his arm, the will-o'-the-wisp spark of flame.

The pursuing vessel was doubtless much closer to us when I first perceived her than I should have supposed by the pallid shadow she made on the troubled darkness of the waters. I think it must have been in less than half-an-hour's time from the moment of my sighting her that she became a huge, easy-distinguishable shape in the heart of our wake. You saw sail upon sail towering upon her in pale spaces, which glimmered as though she reflected a strong starlight. By this time the news had reached the cuddy, and the captain had come on deck, together with most of the passengers, and we stood in a crowd, watching, and waiting, and wondering; for not yet had the tall and rushing phantom astern of us offered to shift her helm, and to my young eyes it seemed as though she was bound to steer right into us, cleaving us to amidships, like splitting a log with the blow of a hatchet.

"What does he mean to do? There seems no look-out on board!" called the captain to the mate. "Show more lights, Mr. Johnson, and let it be done quickly."

The officer delivered some orders in a sharp, eager voice, and in a few minutes three or four sailors came running aft with large lanterns swinging in their hands.

"She has the cut of a Yankee," I heard the captain say to the mate; "her high bows and crowd of canvas forward screen us from her quarter-deck. Great thunder! is she in a madman's hands? She will be into us, sir. Fire a rocket!"

These signals were kept somewhere below. A midshipman shot away like an arrow, and returned, and then up soared the thing, the fire of it hissing as it sped javelin-like into the flying thickness on high, where it burst like a flash of lightning, flinging a green radiance far and wide, and sailing in a ball of flame slowly over our mizzen-mast-head on to the lee-bow.

Almost simultaneously with the detonation it made, like the blast of a blunderbuss, we saw the head of the vessel astern falling off. As she rose foaming to the head of a sea, her flying jibboom went majestically rounding away to leeward of us, opening out the fabric behind into a ship of some fifteen hundred tons, with high black sides and cotton-white canvas of the Yankee swelling from the water-ways to the trucks. A sort of groan of astonishment and admiration, mingled with a deep note of the fear that had been excited, arose from amongst the crowd of us. Indeed, but for her

putting her helm over, her long bowsprit and tapering jibbooms must have been spearing our rigging in another five minutes, and her sharp clipper stem grinding into our counter.

A voice hailed us from her; our captain sprang on to the grating abaft the wheel, and roared back, "What d'ye say?" But no response was made to this. She swept past to leeward, within a musket-shot. You could hear the thunder of the wind in her canvas, and the roaring of the water crushed into yeast at her stem. It was like hearkening to the beating of surf on a stormy night on the sea-coast. She showed no light of any kind, not a spot of brightness on her deck or in her side to relieve the deep dye of blackness her hull made upon the obscurity. In a few minutes she had forged ahead, and a little later she had melted ou' upon the gloom over the port bow.

CHAPTER VI.

HE IS STRUCK BY LIGHTNING.

THIS was an incident to kill the tediousness of my first watch on deck very pleasantly. It was seeing life at sea too, tasting the excitement of it, and when eight bells sounded, and I went below, I began in good truth to feel myself something of a sailor.

But it was "watch and watch," with us on board that ship, as in all other ships of those days, though what the practice is now in this age of steamboats I will not undertake to say. By "watch and watch," I mean that one division of the crew went below for four hours, whilst the other division kept the deck. Those below then came up again for another four hours' duty, and so on till the dog watches came round, when each watch had two hours of duty only, the object of the change being to vary the time of the four hours' watches; so that, for example, if one division had to keep the middle watch, say on a Monday the dog watches contrived

that that spell of duty would next night fall to the lot of the other division.

What "watch and watch" signified I never could have imagined till four o'clock in the morning was struck on the ship's bell, and the midshipmen who had been on deck since midnight came in their headlong way below to rout us up.

"Eight bells! eight bells, my honeys!" they roared. "Out you come, and up you go! It rains beautifully, and is still as black as thunder all round."

I was in a dead sleep, and could scarcely open my eyes. By way of helping me to wake up, one of the lads who had just descended threw his streaming sou'-wester at my face.

"Who'd be a sailor?" yawned the long midshipman named Poole. "This is a part of the life that they know nothing about ashore."

"Oh, what would I give for my feather bed at home!" groaned another youngster, drowsily thrusting his arms into a damp jacket.

"Lively now, or I'll feather bed ye!" shouted Mr. Cock from his corner bunk. "A sailor who talks of a feather bed should be tarred first before the down's applied. My precious limbs! Was it out of such whinings as this that Trafalgar's victory was manufactured?"

But there was no magic in the thoughts of Nelson to inspirit one at such a moment as this. For my

part, my sympathies were wholly with the lad who yearned for a feather bed, and though I had promised my father not to swap my clothes, I would have gladly given half my outfit for the privilege of turning in again. Oh the misery of the cold and wet of the deck, going to it as I did with lids of lead, and trembling in oilskins, from the comfort and warmth of the blankets! I shall give up the sea, I thought as I climbed the poop ladder with chattering teeth: I have already had enough of it. I would go on shore at once if I could. What is there in brass buttons to render this sort of thing tolerable?

There were no signs of daybreak till about six o'clock, and then down away in the east there stole out upon the gloom a faint, most melancholy grey light, against which the ridge horizon washed in a tumbling line of ink. How am I to express the cheerless aspect of the ship in the illumination of this dull and dismal dawn? Her reefed canvas was dark with wet, her slack gear was blown into semi-circles by the gale, her scuppers sobbed with wet, and the water floated from side to side of her deck with her rolling. But all the same, the planks had to be washed down, the hen-coops cleansed, and the poop made tidy; so as soon as light enough came to see by, the pump was rigged, buckets got along, and there we were scrubbing for our lives, with smoke from the newly-kindled galley fire

breaking from the chimney, the boatswain on the main-deck pointing his hose, and bawling to the sailors to scrub with a will, the wide-awake pigs under the long-boat grunting for their breakfast, the cow lowing gloomily at catching sight of the butcher's mate, and the ship all the while rushing before the strong gale, with the chasing seas breaking in foam to the height of the main-brace bumpkins, and a grim and yellow salt in a tight sou'-wester swinging off upon the wheel, and mumbling upon a quid that stood high in his cheek, as though he were muttering sea-blessings to himself on the ocean life in general, and on the *Lady Violet* in particular.

Well, when the gale broke we had fine weather, and nothing noticeable happened for some days. The passengers got the better of their sea-sickness, and came on deck, and the ship looked hospitable and homely, with ladies reading or knitting, or walking the decks aft, and with the poor women of the steerage forward sitting in the sun, with coloured handkerchiefs tied round their heads, their children romping about their feet, and the men belonging to their company lounging against the bulwarks, pipes between their teeth, their hats slouched, and their arms folded.

We were sliding towards the warm parallels, and Mr. Cock told me to keep a bright look-out for flying fish, as we should be seeing them spark out

of the blue water alongside before long, "like silver paper-cutters, Master Rockafellar," said he, "on the gauze wings of the dragon-fly." By this time I was able to crawl aloft without a beating heart and trembling body. I could shin over the mizzen-top as lightly and easily as the rest of them, and had been once on to the mizzen-royal-yard, the highest yard on the mizzen-mast, to watch Kennet roll the sail up, that I might know how to furl it for myself another time.

In fact, I had now climbed the rigging often enough to enjoy being aloft. I would think as I poised myself upon a foot-rope, and overhung the yard it belonged to, that nothing nearer to the sensation of flying could be imagined. I swung between heaven and sea. The soft cream-coloured clouds looked to be rolling close over my head. Far away down was the narrow white deck of the ship, with sail upon sail swelling in curves of snow-white softness betwixt where I was perched, and the ivory-like planks deep down below. The blue ocean swept away into boundless distance, and the world of waters looked as huge as though the sight of them was a dream.

At last came a day that was to be marked by an incident of terror. The captain and mates had taken the sun at noon; the sailors had eaten their dinner, and the port-watch, the one that I belonged to, was on deck, to remain there till four. Two of

the midshipmen were on the cross-jack-yard at work on some job there, the third was below, and I, the fourth of them, hung about the break of the poop in readiness to run on an errand, and to jump to any order given me.

It was a fine warm day, the wind right aft, and the ship was buzzing along with studding sails out on both sides. The tiffin bell had just sounded; there was nobody on the poop but the chief mate, myself, and the man at the wheel. Through the skylight I could see the passengers assembling at the luncheon table. Presently noticing that Mr. Johnson, the chief officer, was staring with unusual steadfastness at the horizon over the stern, I sent a look in that direction, and observed that there was a large black cloud sailing up the sky, exactly on a line with the course we were making. I never had before, and have never since, seen a body of vapour with so ugly a look. Its hinder part was tufted into the true aspect of thunder; its brow was a pale sulphur colour, which darkened into a swollen curve of livid belly; its wild extraordinary shape too made you think of it as of some leviathan flying beast, a mighty dragon, such as one reads about, or some huge and horrible creation descending from another world. The black shadow it threw upon the sea contrasted oddly with the flashing blue that was streaming merrily with us along the path of the wind.

However, it is a saying with Jack that you need never fear a squall that you can see through. The blue sky showed clear and bright past the tail of the cloud on the sea-line, as the mass of black vapour soared. The mate turned to pace the deck, just sending a careless glance over the stern now and again. It was easy to guess that he saw nothing to trouble him there; no order was given, and the ship continued to sail pleasantly on the wings of her far overhanging canvas before the warm and gushing wind.

Gradually the cloud overtook us, and then it overhung the vessel like an immense black canopy, plunging us and a great space of sea into gloom, and all around, beyond the confines of its murky dye, was shining summer weather. But the cloud, instead of blowing ahead, lingered over us as though its stooping bosom was arrested by our mast-heads, or the whole electric body of it attracted by our tall fabric. No rain fell, no squally gust of wind swept from it through the regular breathing of the breeze astern. The mate crossed over to where I was standing, and looked over the rail into the main-chains.

"Ha!" he cried, "jump down there, Master Rockafellar," pointing to the platform called the channel, which in those days served to spread the rigging, "and cast that lightning conductor adrift."

Now, this lightning conductor was of copper

"I FELT MYSELF SWEPT BACKWARDS."

wire; the point of it rose above the main truck, and the length of it was led down the main-royal back-stay to the water's edge. But the bottom end of it, instead of trailing in the water, was coiled up and "stopped," as it is called, to one of the lanyards of the shrouds. In other words, it was tied to a part of the rigging by rope-yarns.

I stood a moment feeling for my knife, which I then remembered I had left in my bunk. The mate seeing that I was at a loss, and understanding by my gestures what my want was, cried to a young ordinary seaman, who was on the main-deck, to jump into the chains and cut the lightning conductor adrift, and drop the end overboard. He was a fine young fellow—an Irishman, I remember, named Barry. His sheath-knife was on his hip, and he whipped the blade from its leather case, as he bounded on to the top-gallant-rail, and dropped over the side into the main chains.

He had got his hand on the coil of wire, and was in the act of passing his knife through the rope-yarns, when a great spurt of flame fell in a dazzling flash down the rigging. The whole ship seem to reel out of the shadow that was upon her in a blaze of crimson glory. In the same breath there was a single blast of thunder, one dead enormous shock, that seemed to bring the vessel to a stand, and thrill through every plank in her, as though she had grounded. I was standing close to the rail at

the moment; the flame rushed close past me; the air was scorching hot with it; but, for the beat of a pulse only, so far as I was concerned, for I felt myself swept backwards, as though lifted off my feet, and fell at full length upon my back. I immediately sprang to my legs, almost out of my mind with bewilderment and terror, but in no wise hurt. The mate, grasping the rail with one hand, was shading his eyes with the other. The captain, followed by all the passengers, came rushing up out of the cuddy, whilst such of the crew as were below tumbled headlong from the forecastle to see what had become of the ship.

"What is it? What is it?" shouted the skipper, as he ran towards us.

The mate turned his face, but continued to keep his eyes covered. "God forgive me!" he exclaimed; "I believe I am struck blind."

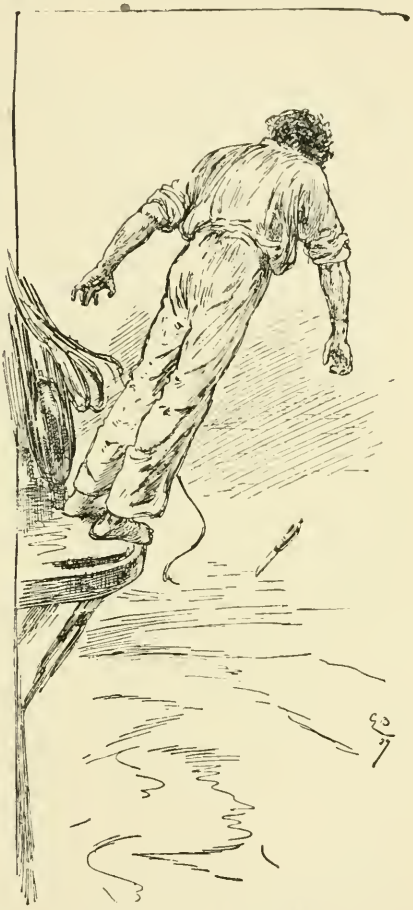
In a moment the captain saw how it was, and the ship's doctor, without a word, passed his arm through the mate's, and led the poor fellow below.

"How did this happen, Master Rockafellar?" exclaimed the captain.

I quickly told him that the mate had gone to the side to see if the lightning conductor was all right, and had called to one of the ordinary seamen to jump into the chains to clear it.

He stepped to the rail to look over and all

the passengers went with him, shouldering one another to obtain a view. The sailor stood upright, with one hand yet upon the coil of wire. His right hand, from which the knife had fallen, was outstretched, but as we looked we could see it slowly, very slowly, sinking to his side, as the handle of a pump will fall from a horizontal position. I could not see his face; it was turned seawards.



"THE KNIFE HAD FALLEN."

"Are you all right down there, my lad?" sang out the captain.

The young fellow neither answered nor moved.

"He has been stunned!" exclaimed one of the passengers.

"Oh, but wouldn't he have fallen overboard if that were so?" cried another.

The captain shouted to some seamen, who were overhanging the bulwarks in the waist:

"Aft here, a couple of you, and help Barry inboard."

It was at that moment the ship slightly rolled to port, and the figure of Barry plunged into the sea, falling limberly in the most lifelike manner. He struck the water, and lay afloat, and then, as he went astern, I caught a glimpse of his face. It was the colour of chocolate, most horrible to view, with nothing of his eyes showing but the whites, and his lips distended in a dreadful grin, exhibiting his teeth and gums as though his mouth had been torn away. One of the ladies fainted. A shriek arose from many of them. The third mate sprang aft, and I saw him standing erect on the taffrail poising a life-buoy; but even whilst he flourished the thing the body sank.

Never for an instant was it doubted by any of us that he had been struck dead, and that he was a corpse when he fell from the chains. It was a fate I myself had escaped by the very skin of my teeth only! But for my having left my

knife below, I should at once have dropped over the side on being ordered to do so by the mate, and there have been killed by the flash that had slain the unhappy young sailor man! Yet nothing was made of my escape. The captain merely said, "Lucky for you, Master Rockafellar, that you weren't in Barry's place;" whilst the midshipmen hardly referred to the matter, except to say that the mate had no right to put a man to the job of handling a lightning conductor with an electric storm hanging over the mast-heads

CHAPTER VII.

HE HEARS A BELL.

THERE is no sentiment at sea, and if you come off with your life no matter how narrowly, that is enough for *you*. You are not expected to speak of the close shave, unless with a grin of indifference. Let your shipmates believe that you view it seriously, and they will set you down for a swab, a lady sailor, a longshoreman. This arises from an overstrained sense of manliness ; yet it is true, nevertheless, that no genuine seaman will ever care to make anything of an accident, though no more than an inch of space or a single moment of time stand between him and a horrible end. However, that night, when I was in my bunk, and my messmates asleep, I got upon my knees in my bed, and, with tears and sobs, thanked my Heavenly Father for His preservation of me. I was very heavy when I first laid me down, but I kept myself

awake that I might lift up my young heart in gratitude, and pray for a continuance of God's mercy; and when I put my head again on the bolster, there was just such a sense of peace and happiness in me as would have come had my mother stood by my bedside and kissed me.

For four days the mate was off duty, and it was feared that he would lose his sight, but to the general satisfaction of all hands—for he was an excellent seaman, a kind-hearted man, and popular fore and aft—he made his appearance on deck on the morning of the fifth day with a shade over his eyes, and by the end of the week his old power of vision was perfectly restored to him.

We took the trade wind, and swept down the broad Atlantic Ocean, making run after run in the twenty-four hours that was almost equal to steam, as steam then went. I was now as nimble aloft as need be, knew all the ropes of the ship, had learnt to make most of the principal knots, could polish a length of brass-work with the best of them, and, in other ways, was winning recognition as being of some use aft, small as I was. Mr. Cock was very kind to me, he showed me how to use the sextant, and took much trouble in explaining points of navigation.

Once during a quiet middle watch—that is, from midnight until four in the morning—I was standing near the wheel, looking at the compass,

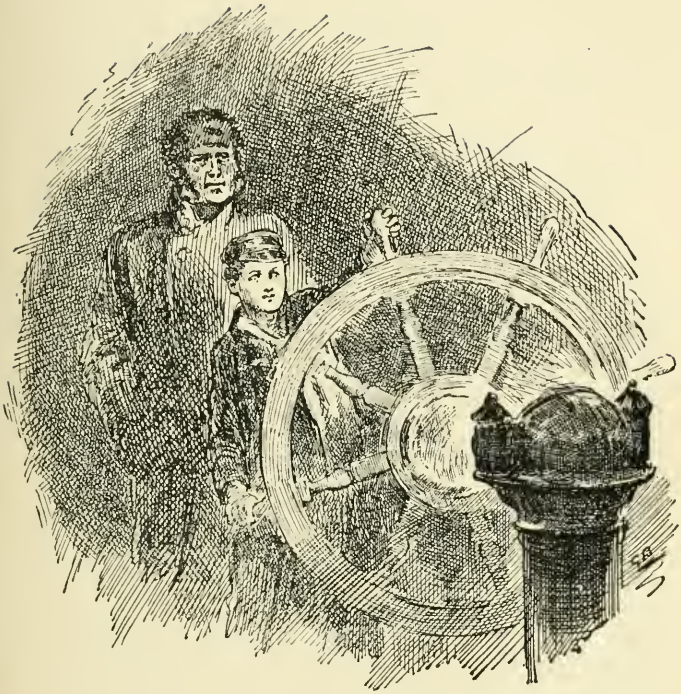
and thinking how like a live thing it was, as sentient as though it were informed by a human spirit, marvellously and beautifully faithful as a finger pointing the way to the mariner over the trackless breast of the deep. I was standing, I say, with my little head full of fancies coming into it out of the luminous circle of card, when Mr. Johnson, coming up, asked me if I would like to steer.

"Ay, sir," I answered, "I should, very much."

"You're but a little one for that big wheel," said he, and I could see him smiling by the starlight, "but the helm don't kick, and you're here to learn. Give him hold of the spokes, Hunt," said he, addressing the man, "and show him what to do:" and so saying, he fell to patrolling the deck afresh, softly whistling, as if for more wind.

The breeze was abeam, a pleasant air that held the sails motionless, and we were quietly going along at about four and a half knots. I grasped the wheel, and the man stood behind me.

"Now, young gen'man," said he, "you see that there mark? We calls that the *lubber's point.* It's on a line with the ship's head, and when you know your course, you've got to keep the p'int of it dead on end with that there mark, if so be as she don't break off, or if so be as



"I GRASPED THE WHEEL."

there ain't no sea on. But if her head swings, then you've got to hit what's called the mean of the oscillations of the card. Can you tell how her head is now?"

"Sou', sou'-west," I answered.

"You look again," said he.

"South by west, three-quarters west," said I after a prolonged squint at the compass.

"Right!" said he; "now you keep her to *that*."

She needed no steering, however. At long intervals a very small movement of the helm sufficed; but my enjoyment was very great. I was not yet fourteen, but had I been forty I could not have felt more fully a man. I cannot express how great was the sense of importance which possessed me when I considered that the big ship, with her costly freight and the many souls who were sleeping under my feet, was being directed by my young hands through the great enveloping shadow of the night. At first I could scarcely realize my power, and asked permission of the somewhat hoarse salt who leaned upon the grating behind me to move the wheel, that I might make sure that the ship would respond to the helm in *my* hands.

"Well," he answered, "I dunno that half a p'int off 'll sinnify for a minute. Try her if you like, my lad."

So I put my small weight upon the spokes, and brought the wheel over, till the sailor in muffled accents (that the mate might not hear) cried "So!" Great was my delight on observing the card to swing.

"There, young gen'men," exclaimed my companion, "she's a willing old mare, ye see. Now bring her to her course again."

I thrust the spokes over the other way, intently staring at the card.

"Stead-*dee!*" came a hoarse whisper from behind me: "meet her, my lad, or she'll be a p'int too high afore you know where you are."

But he had to show me what he meant by slightly reversing the helm, as the ship came back to her course. I was highly delighted, and should have been glad to steer for the remainder of the night. However, the mate broke into my enjoyment by ordering me to trim the binnacle lamp; but always afterwards I was on the look-out for an opportunity to take the wheel, my experiences creeping cautiously from light airs into smart breezes, until it came to my being as well qualified as any man on board, having regard to my strength, of course, to stand a "trick."

This reference to my first standing at the wheel of the *Lady Violet* recalls to my mind another incident of the middle watch a week or

two later on. We were nearing the equator, and had already penetrated that glassy belt of baffling airs and sneaking catspaws extending a degree or two on either hand the Line, and universally spoken of by sailors as the "Doldrums." I turned out at midnight and went on deck. The sky was very full of large rich trembling stars, yet they seemed to diffuse no light, saving one planet in the south under which there lay in the black breast of the deep a little icy gleam of wake, or reflection; otherwise the ocean stretched as black as thunder to its horizon. There was a gentle wind blowing off the quarter, just enough to give us steerage way, with a long light swell from the westwards, upon which the ship rolled as regularly as the tick of a clock, her topsail sometimes coming in to the mast with a clap that made one think a gun had been fired up aloft.

It was a very hot night; now and again there was a delicate winking of violet lightning in the far north-east. It was about twenty minutes after midnight, and I was walking up and down the poop to leeward with Kennet, hearing him tell of a donkey race that he once rode in, when he suddenly came to a stand holding his breath as it were, and then exclaimed in a mysterious voice, "I thay, Rockafellar, what'th that?"

"What do you mean?" I asked; "anything to see or listen to?"

"To liththen to," he said.

I strained my ear.

"There!" he cried.

"A bell," I explained. "There must be a ship near us. The sound is off abeam here," and we stepped to the lee rail on the port side of the vessel.

The chimes of a bell tolling very slowly, as though for a funeral, could be heard with curious distinctness, so delicate a vehicle for the transmission of sound is smooth water.

"Therth a bell ringing out to port here, thir," called out Kennet to the mate.

Mr. Johnson crossed over to our side, and listened.

"Yes, a bell sure enough," said he presently, after peering earnestly into the gloom in the direction of the noise, "but I see nothing of a shadow to resemble a ship. Do you, young gentlemen? Your eyes should be keener than mine."

We stared our hardest, and answered, "Nothing, sir."

"Fetch my binocular glass, Rockafellar."

He searched the sea narrowly through it, but there was no distinguishable smudge of any sort.

Black as the ocean was, there were stars hanging low over the horizon, and had there been a ship within five miles of us, the eclipse

of those stars by her sails would have revealed her. But the tolling assured us that the bell could not be half-a-mile distant. It swung in long floating chimes across the water, and I cannot express the quality of mystery and awe which the strange noise put into the darkness of the night. It made one think of a church ashore, and a graveyard with its mouldering stones glimmering to the starlight.

"Fo'k'sle there!" shouted Mr. Johnson, "do you hear the sound of a bell off the sea?"

"Ay, ay, sir," came a growling answer out of the deep gloom of the fore part of the ship.

"Can you make out anything like a sail?"

There was a pause, and then came the reply, "No, sir; there's nothing in sight."

"This beats all my going a-fishing," said the mate, going to the rail to listen again.

The watch on deck uncoiled themselves from the secret nooks in which they had been dozing, and went to the bulwarks, which they overhung listening, and then broke into exclamations as the ghostly tolling met their ears. Some of the fellows who were off duty, disturbed by the noise on deck, came out of the forecastle; then the captain arrived through the companion-hatch, and was presently followed by some passengers, so that it seemed as if the bell had woke the whole ship up; for here were we with a tolerably

crowded deck, and the hour one o'clock in the morning.

The growing clearness of the chimes showed that we were approaching the bell. The helm was shifted, so as to head the vessel in the direction of the sound, but very shortly after this had been done the wind failed, and a clock-calm fell ; the long light swell rolled in folds of polished ebony, and we lay without an inch of way upon us.

The chiming of the bell, that did not now seem two cables' length away from us ahead, broke with startling clearness through the dull flapping of the canvas as the *Lady Violet* swayed. Yet there was nothing to be seen. Maybe there were now some eighty pairs of eyes staring from poop, main-deck, and forecastle, but there was nothing between us and the stars of the horizon. What could it be? I remember that my own little heart beat fast when Kennet, in a voice of awe, said that he reckoned it was some spirit of the sea ringing the ship's funeral bell, and that he wouldn't be surprised if by this time to-morrow night we were all dead men. You could hear a murmur of superstitious whispers and talk rolling along the line of sailors and steerage passengers at the rail. The captain poop-poohed, and I heard him say—

"Pshaw, gentlemen, there are no *Flying Dutchmen* in this age. It is a bell, I grant, and where

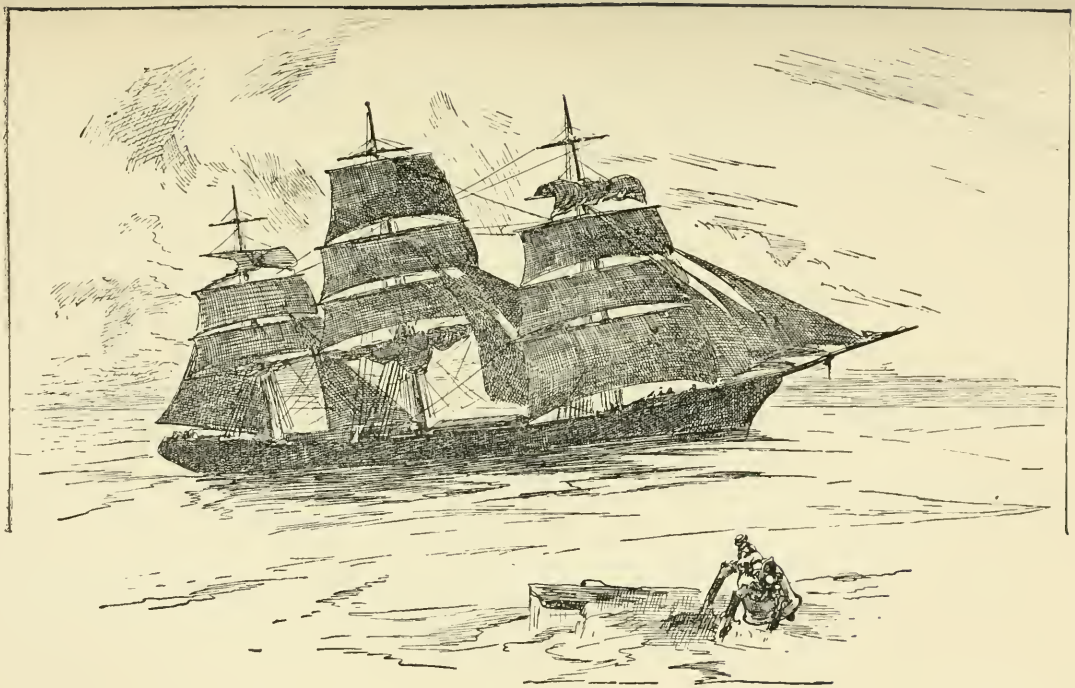
the noise comes from I don't know, but there is nothing in a little conundrum of this kind to alarm us."

But all the same, even to my youthful ears, the secret superstitious dismay and wonder which were upon him sounded so clear in his voice that one did not want to see his face to know how he felt. All night long the bell continued to toll just off the bow, and not a sigh of wind was to be felt, so dead was the calm that had come down. Never a man or a boy of us all turned in. I went on to the forecastle with others, and followed Kennet on to the flying jibboom, at the extremity of which long spar we were nearer to the object that produced the noise than any person who remained inboard was, but there was nothing to be seen, though I stared into the quarter whence the chimes were issuing in a regular tolling, rhythmic as the heave of the swell, until my eyes reeled in my head.

The puzzle was not to be solved till daybreak, and then, when the swift tropic dawn had brightened out the sea from line to line, a cry half of laughter, half of indignation, seemed to break from all hands, as though they could now scorn themselves for the emotions of the night. In fact, within a quarter of a mile ahead of us there rose and fell upon the swell, that was still polished as quicksilver, a small wooden frame of an ellip-

tical form, supported on a somewhat broad platform, portions of the planking of which were split, as though it had at one time formed a solid body which had been wrenched and mutilated by a blow of the sea. Under the frame, amidships of it, dangled a large ship's bell, the tongue of which, vibrating regularly as the heave of the sea swayed the whole fabric, struck the metal sides, and produced the dismal and melancholy tolling which had kept us awake and filled us with consternation throughout the night! Little wonder that the keenest eyes amongst us should not have perceived it; even by daylight, and at a short distance from us, it showed but as a very little object—so small indeed, that had it passed us within a biscuit-toss in the darkness, it must have slipped by unperceived.

It was no doubt a part of a wreck, and had probably belonged to some foreign ship. We could afford to laugh at our fears now, and certainly we deserved the relief of a little merriment, for our superstitious alarm throughout the long hours of the darkness had been very considerable.



"UNDER THE FRAME . . . DANGLED A LARGE SHIP'S BELL."

CHAPTER VIII.

HE SEES THE EQUATOR.

We crossed the equator a little before noon on a Tuesday. Though I had learnt at school all about the imaginary line that girdles the earth, yet I was stupid enough to believe what Kennet and the others told me: namely, that if I ascended to the foretop with a telescope, and pointed it steadily over the starboard cat-head, I should obtain a good view of the equator. No more was necessary than to ascertain at what hour the ship was likely to cross the line, so as to save the anxiety of looking for the circle when it might still be some distance below the edge of the sea. On the morning of this Tuesday Kennet arrived on the poop with a telescope in his hand, and said—

"Poole and I are going into the foretop to view the equator. It should be in sight now from that height, for I heard the chief mate tell Mrs. Moore that if this air held we should be crossing

it about half-past eleven. Will you come along with us, Rockafellar?"

"Yes," said I; "I should like to see the equator. It will be something to talk about when I get home."

We went forward and got into the fore-shrouds on the lee-side, that our going aloft might not be noticed from the poop. When we were in the top, Poole steadied the glass against the top-mast rigging, and instantly cried out "Beautiful!"

"Is it in sight?" I exclaimed eagerly.

"Oh, lovely! oh, divine!" he said in a voice of rapture, with his eye glued to the glass. "Kennet, my dear, come and take a look."

He held the glass, and Kennet peered.

"Ha!" shouted the long-nosed youth, drinking in a deep breath: "a noble picture, by George! I wonder if the captain would let 'uth go athore upon it? Wouldn't a ride on a camel be jolly along that ththrait road."

They were as grave as a pair of judges, saving the rapture which they endeavoured to express with their countenances.

"I say, Poole, let's have a look!" said I, thirsting with curiosity.

"Make way for him, Kennet," cried Poole.

I put my eye to the telescope, which the midshipman continued to hold steady against the

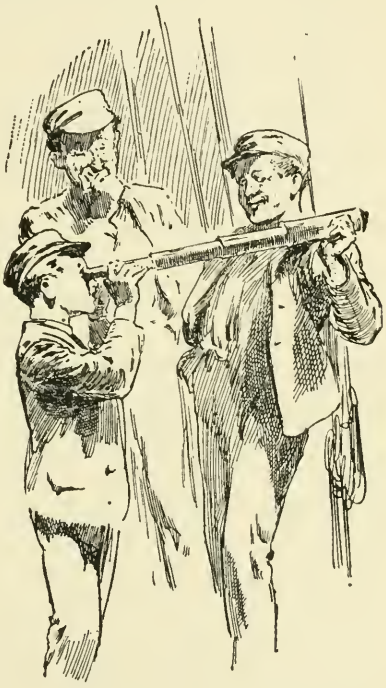
rigging, and sure enough, just a little way over the horizon, was the equator, a thin, very well-defined line, showing against the light azure of the sky like a delicate ruling in ink.

"Thee it?" cried Kennet.

"Yes," said I, eagerly staring; "but it's up in the air, Poole."

"Refraction, man, refraction," he answered; "it always shows like that."

I sent a glance with my naked eye, and then peered again through the telescope.



"I PUT MY EYE TO THE TELESCOPE.'

"When shall we be able to see it without a glass?" I asked.

"That'll depend upon the thtate of the weather," answered Kennet.

"But do we sail *under* it?"

"Oh, hang it, Rockafellar!" cried Poole, "you're

not at school now, little boy! Who's to answer such questions? Let's down on deck, or the mate 'll be singing out."

As I descended the shrouds I saw some sailors at work in the waist, grinning very hard.

"Seen it, sir?" bawled one of them.

"Yes," said I.

"No chance, I hope," he sung out, "of its fouling our mast-heads, is there, sir? Otherwise it 'll sweep every spar overboard."

"No, it looks to be too high up in the air to hurt us," I answered, and trudged aft, followed by a half-smothered chorus of laughter.

The mate stood at the head of the poop ladder.

"Where have you been, sir?" he exclaimed.

"Up in the foretop, sir," I answered.

"And what job carried you there, young gentleman?"

"I have been viewing the equator, sir," I responded.

"Who showed it to you?" said he, with a twinkling eye.

"Mr. Kennet and Mr. Poole, sir," said I.

He beckoned, with a solemn motion of his forefinger, to Kennet, who approached.

"Have you the equator handy about you, young gentleman," he inquired.

Kennet coloured up, and said he had left it in his telescope.

"Bring it here, sir," said the mate, "and let Mr. Poole attend, that we may have the benefit of his learning."

The midshipman disappeared, and shortly after returned, with the glass under his arm and Poole at his heels.

"Now then, young gentlemen," said the mate, "be good enough to show Master Rockafellar the equator from the poop point of view."

Poole looked very sheepish; Kennet hung his long nose over one of the middle lenses, which he unscrewed.

"Now, let's have a good geographical explanation, if you please, Mr. Poole," said the mate.

"There's the line, Rockafellar," said Poole, taking the lens, and pointing to a hair stretched across it, secured by a drop of gum at either extremity.

It was now my turn to colour up. I had been handsomely gulled, and the worst of it was the sailors forward knew it.

"Never mind, Master Rockafellar," said the mate kindly; "older birds than you have been caught by that kind of chaff. You can take the equator below, Mr. Kennet," and, smothering a laugh between his teeth, he walked aft.

I was afterwards told that this was a very ancient trick; but, old as it was, a joke at my expense was made out of it, fore and aft; since

for many days it never came to my passing two or more of the sailors but that one would sing out—

"Bill, seen the line?"

"No, Jack; where is it?"

"In Rockafellar's eye, bully!"

However, to my great satisfaction, in due course this piece of humour grew stale, and was dropped.

I had read, when at home, a good deal about the customs practised by sailors on crossing the equator, and was not a little disappointed to find that the crew went on with their work as unconcernedly as though the Line were a thousand miles distant. I had been haunted by visions of a fine theatrical show, and had secretly longed for the hour that was to exhibit Neptune with a crown on his head, and a beard of oakum on his chin, attended by his wife, his physician, and the several courtiers who made up his train of state. I had followed, with boyish eagerness, the accounts of the ceremony in the works of Marryat and in other novels, and was much dejected on being told by Mr. Cock that this sort of skylarking was out of date.

"And well for you, young gentleman, maybe," said he, "that it is so; for you're a green hand, do you see, and it was always upon the like of you that the forecastle tomfoolery was poured out

thickest. How would you relish, think you, being lathered with a mixture of tar and slush and filth; next, having your cheeks scraped with jagged bits of iron cask-hoops till they bled; then plunged backwards into water enough to drown you, and left to scramble out like a half-dead rat, amidst roars of laughter from the unfeeling Jack? No, no; I'm as fond as any man of honest skylarking, but there was always too much of Old Nick in the temper of the shaving and ducking custom to please my humour: and it's a very good job, I think, that the mouldy bit of barbarity was long ago flung overboard."

The ship was often brought to a stand by calms during our passage of the equator, and these intervals were very monotonous and hard to bear.

The midshipmen's berth was so insufferably hot that during my watch below I was unable to remain in it, and would come on deck and hang about under the break of the poop where the side-wings of the saloon, or cuddy, made a recess, and where one was kept cool by the fanning of light draughts of air sent circling betwixt the rails by the swaying of the folds of the hauled-up main-course.

It was at this time that an old gentleman named Catesby—a passenger—who had lived in Australia for many years, related to some of us lads an extra-

ordinary experience that had befallen him during a voyage he made to India when a young man. The old East-Indiaman was then afloat; pirates were also abundant; there was no steam then to be met with at sea, and the excitement and romance of the ocean were at their height. The old gentleman had known a relative of mine, and took a fancy to me, and would frequently bring a handful of almonds and raisins or some sweet biscuits from his pockets—purloinings from the dessert on the cuddy table—and slip the delicacies into my hand with a merry manner of cautiously looking around him as though he was afraid of the captain seeing him. I remember that he delightfully killed several long hot hours one day by telling two or three of us lads the story of his early adventure. I see him now with a cigar drooping between his lips as he went on reciting, and recall the stare of admiration and expectation we fixed upon his face as he proceeded.

The name which he said he always gave to his story when he told it to his friends was:

"LA MULETTE."

All day long there had been a pleasant breeze blowing from abeam; but as the sun sank into the west the wind fined into light, delicate curls of

shadow upon the sea that, at the hour of sundown when the great luminary hung poised like a vast target of flaming brass upon the ocean-line, turned into a surface of molten gold through which there ran a light, wide, long-drawn heave of swell, regular as a respiration, rhythmic as the sway of a cradle to the song of a mother.

The ship was an Indiaman named the *Ruby;* the time long ago, as human life runs, in this century nevertheless, when the old traditional conditions of the sea-life were yet current—the roundabout Indian voyage by way of the Cape—the slaver sneaking across the parching parallels of the Middle Passage—the piccaroon in the waters of the Antilles dodging the fiery sloop whose adamantine grin of cannons was rendered horribly significant to the eye of the greasy pirate by the cross of crimson under whose meteoric folds the broadside thundered.

I was a passenger aboard the *Ruby*, making the voyage to India for my pleasure. The fact was, being a man of independent means, I was without any sort of business to detain me at home. Your continental excursion was but a twopenny business to me. Here was this huge ball of earth to be circumnavigated whilst one was young, with spirits rendered waterproof by health. Time enough, I thought, to amble about Europe when Australia began to look a long way off. So this was my

third voyage. One I had made to Sydney and Melbourne, and a second to China; and now I was bound to Bombay with some kind of notion beyond of striking into Persia, thence to Arabia, and so home by way of the classic shores of the Mediterranean.

Well, it happened this 18th of June to be the captain's birthday. His name was Bow; he would be fifty-three years old that day he told us, and as he had used the sea since the age of thirteen he was to be taken as a man who knew his business. And a better sailor there never was, and never also was there a person who looked less like a sailor. If ever you have seen a print of Charles Lamb you have had an excellent likeness of Captain Bow before you—a pale, spare creature of a somewhat Hebraic cast of countenance, with a brow undarkened by any stains of weather. His memory went far back; he had served as mate in John Company's ships, had known Commodore Dance who beat Linois and spoke of him as a perfect gentleman; deplored the gradual decay of the British sailor, and would talk with a wistful gleam in his eye of the grand and generous policy of the Leadenhall Street Directors in allowing to their captains as much cubic capacity in the ships they commanded for their own private use and emolument as would furnish out the dimensions of a considerable smack.

It was his birthday and long ago all of us passengers had made up our minds to celebrate the occasion by a supper, a dance on deck, and by obtaining permission for Jack forward to have a ball on condition that we should be allowed to ply him with drink enough to keep his heels nimble and no more. We were in the Indian Ocean climbing north somewhere upon the longitude of Amsterdam Island, so formidable was the easting made in the fine old times. The latitude, I think, was about 12° south, and desperately hot it was, though the sun hung well in the north. Spite of awnings and wet swabs the planks of the deck seemed to tingle like burning tin through the thin soles of your boots. If you put your nose into an open skylight the air that rose drove you back with a sense of suffocation, so heavily was the fiery stagnation of it loaded with smells of food and of the cabin interior, though there never was a sweeter and breezier cuddy, with its big windows and wind-sail-heels when the thermometer gave the place the least chance. But when the sun was nearly setting, some sailors quietly came aft and fell to work to make a ball-room of the poop. They took the bunting out of the signal locker and stretched it along the ridge-ropes betwixt the awning and the rail until it was like standing inside a huge Chinese lantern for colour. They hung the ship's lamps along in rows, roused up the piano from its

moorings in the cuddy, embellished the tops of the henecoops with red baize, and in fifty directions not worth the trouble of indicating, so decorated and glorified the after-end of the ship that when the lamps came to be lighted with streaks of pearl-coloured moonshine glittering upon the deck betwixt the interstices of the signal flags, and movement enough in the tranquil lift of the great fabric to the swell to fill the eye with alternations of swaying shadow and gleam, this ball-room of almond-white plank and canvas ceiling of milky softness and walls of radiant banners was more like some fairy sea-vision than a reality, especially with the glimpse you caught of the vast silent ocean solitude outside with its sky of hovering stars and a stillness as of a dead world in the atmosphere—such a contrast, by heaven! to the revelry within the shipboard pavilion, when once the music had struck up and the forms of women in white gowns fluffing up about them like soapsuds were swimming round the decks in the embrace of their partners, that a kind of shudder would come into you with the mere thinking of the difference between the two things.

The music was good; there was a steerage passenger, a lady, who played the piano incomparably well; then there was a cuddy passenger who blew upon the flute very finely indeed. A military officer returning to India after a long spell of sick-

leave at home had as light, delicate and accomplished a hand on the fiddle as any of the best of the first violins which I have heard in the crackest of orchestras. When the committee of passengers had been talking about and arranging for this band the chief officer told them that if they thought there would not be instruments enough there was a man forward, a fellow named Ratt, who played the fiddle exquisitely, and, if we wished it, he would make one of the instrumentalists. We consented, and for several days previous to this night you might have heard Ratt rehearsing in the 'tween decks, scraping in a way that made the military gentleman returning from sick-leave look somewhat grave. He spoke of Ratt with a foreboding eye, and what he feared happened. The man could indeed play, but he had no sense of *time*. All went wrong with the first dance-air that was struck up. The tune he made was right enough; but it was always darting ahead and bewildering the others and finally the band came to a stop, though Ratt continued to play several bars, whilst the military gentleman in great temper was shouting to him to go away. I should have felt sorry for the poor fellow had he not been saucy, for he had dressed himself with extraordinary care, greased every separate hair upon his head as though it had been a rope-yarn and had arrived aft with a sailor's expectation of seeing plenty of fun and getting

plenty of drink. It ended in the chief mate grasping him by the collar and tumbling him down the poop ladder. I afterwards heard that he went forward and in a towering passion threw his fiddle overboard, swearing that he would never play upon anything again but the Jew's harp and then only for hogs to dance to; there was no longer any taste left amongst human beings, he said, for good music.

The merriment aft was scarcely affected by this instant's failure. The moment Jack had been tumbled off the poop the instrumentalists began afresh and the decks were once more filled with sliding and revolving couples. I had slightly sprained my ankle that morning by kicking against a coil of rope and was unable to dance; but this was no deprivation to me on a burning hot night, with no place for the draughts out of the fanning canvas to come through, and the smell of blistered paint rising in a lukewarm breathing off the sides of the ship as though the sun still stood over the main-truck. So squatting myself on a hencoop I sat gazing at the merry, moving, radiant picture and listening to the music and to the laughter of the girls which came back from the canvas roof of the poop in echoes soft and clear as the notes of the flute.

There were thirty-two cabin passengers in all, and we had a poopful, as you will suppose. There

were more than a dozen girls, dark and fair, most of them pretty enough. There were a few young married ladies too and a little mob of dignified mammas. The men were of the old-fashioned mixture, a few military officers, a sprinkling of Civil Service young gentlemen, fierce old men with white whiskers and gleaming eyes, with peppercorns for livers and with a capacity of putting on the tender aspects of Bengal tigers when anything went wrong—merchants, judges, planters—I can scarce remember now what they were. There were lanterns enough to make a bright light, and some of them being of coloured glass threw bars of ruby and of emerald against the yellow radiance of the clear flame and the ivory streaks of moonlight. Far aft was the wheel with the brass upon it reflecting the lustre till it glowed out against the blackness over the stern like a circle of dull fire upon the liquid obscurity. Grasping the spokes of it was the figure of a seaman, smartly apparelled in flowing duck and a grass hat on "nine hairs"; his shape, dim in the distance, floated up and down against a bright star or two; but there was little need for him to keep his eye on the course. The calm was dead as dead could be. Half-an-hour since the ship's head was north-west and now it was west, and the swell was under the bow with a strange melancholy sob of water breaking into the pauses betwixt the music and sounding like the

sigh of a weeping giant somewhere in the blackness over the side.

And black the water was spite of the air being brimful of the soft silver of the moonlight. On either hand the planet's wake the ocean ran in ebony to the indigo of the night sky; but you only needed to steal to the break of the poop clear of the awning to mark how gloriously the luminary was limning the ship as if she had no other magic for the deep that night. Every sail was a square of pearl, every shroud and backstay, every brace and halliard a rope of silver wire, the yards of ivory, with hundreds of stars of delicate splendour sparkling and flashing in the dew along the rails. The Jacks had rigged up lanterns forward and were cutting capers on the forecastle and in the waist to some queer music that was coming out of the darkness upon the booms. It was strange enough to see their whiskered faces revolving in the weak, illusive light, to witness apparitions of knobs and warts and wrinkles storm-darkened to the hue of the shell of a walnut showing out for an instant to the glare of a lantern. There was great laughter that way and a jovial growling of voices. I believe the sailors had got, with the captain's leave, some of the women of the steerage passengers to dance with, and their happiness was very great; for give Jack a fiddle, and a girl to twirl to the sawing of it, and a drink of rum and

water to fill up the short measures of his breathing-times, and he will ask for no other paradise ashore or afloat.

Much was made of old Captain Bow. He looked as if he had taken all day to dress himself, so skewered was he in a garb of the old school; tail-coat, a frill, a collar half way the height of the back of his head, buff waistcoat, tight pantaloons, shoes like pumps, and a heavy ground-tackle of seals dangling from the rim of his vest.

"Captain shows nobly to-night, sir," said the chief mate to me.

"Ay!" said I, "little enough of the salt in *him* you'd think."

"He dances well enough for an old shellback," said the mate. "A man needs a ship for a dancing-master to teach him how to spread his toes as the Captain does."

"Aren't you dancing?" I asked.

"No, it's my watch on deck. I've got the ship to look after. But it's little watching she wants. Oh, blow, my sweet breeze, blow!" he whispered, with a pensive cock of his eye at the sea through a space between the flags. "It isn't to be the only birthday aboard us, I allow, Mr. Catesby. If the cockroaches below aren't celebrating some festival of their own, then are we manned with marines, sir. Phew! the Hooghley of a dead night with bodies foul of the cable and the gangway ladder is

a joke to this What's become of the wind? What's become of the wind?" and he stole away to the wheel softly whistling between his teeth.

It was too sultry to eat; the very drink you got was so warm that you swallowed it only for thirst, and put down the glass with a sort of loathing. When I took a peep through the after skylight and saw the tables laid out for supper for the special birthday feast that was to be eaten, my tongue did cleave to the roof of my mouth, and I felt as if I should never be able to eat another blessed morsel of food this side the grave. Every dish looked exhausted with perspiration; the hams were melting, the fowls shone like varnish, much that had come solid to the table was now fluid. However I was one of the committee and it would not do for me to be absent, so when the bell rang to announce supper and the music stopped, I stepped up to the wife of a colonel and, giving her my arm, fell in with the procession and entered the cabin.

It is a picture I need but close my eyes to vividly witness anew. There were two tables, one athwartships well aft, and the other running pretty nearly down the whole length of the cabin. The interior was lighted with elegant silver lamps, and along the length of the ceiling there was a beautiful embellishment of ferns, goldfish in globes, and so forth. On either hand went a range of berths, the bulkheads richly inlaid, the panels hand-painted,

and there was many another little touch full of grace and taste. Far aft, at the centre of the athwartship table—his quaint, old-fashioned figure showing like a cameo upon the dull ground of the bulkhead behind him—sat the captain, talking to right and left, with a dry, kind smile lying wrinkled upon his face like the meshes of a South African spider's web. On either side of him went a row of passengers, down to the foot of the table that was over against the cuddy front. The ladies' dresses were handsome; we were an assemblage of rich folks for the most part, and had thoroughly overhauled our wardrobes that we might do fitting honour to this very interesting occasion. Jewels sparkled in white ears, and upon white wrists and fingers. We were not lacking in turbans and feathers, in thick gold chains, immense brooches bearing the heads of the living or of the departed. There was much popping of champagne corks, much rushing about of stewards, much laughter, and a busy undertone of talk. The memory of the picture dwells in me with an odd pertinacity. I had shared in more than one festive scene on board ship in my time, but in none do I recall the significance which the framework of vast ocean solitude outside, of the deep mystery of the wide moonlit shadow, and the oppressive peace of the tropical night, communicated to this one. It might have been the number of the folks assem-

bled; their gay, and in many instances, even splendid attire, the essentially shore-going qualities of the merry-making, clearly defining themselves in the heart of the deep—like the sight of a house in a flood. In fact the scene completely dominated all ship-board habits, and the thoughts which grew out of them. It made every heave of the fabric upon the weak, black, invisible swell a sort of wonder as though some novel element were introduced; the familiar creak of a bulkhead, the faint jar of the rudder upon its post caused one to start as one would to such things ashore.

"You are refusing everything the stewards offer you, Mr. Catesby," said the colonel's lady by my side. "You are in love."

"I am in a fever, madam," I replied: "the tropics usually affect me as a profound passion. In fact I feel as if I could drown myself."

"Why make a voyage to India, then, Mr. Catesby? Is there not the North-West Passage left to explore, with the great Arctic Circle to keep ye cool?"

"Madam," said I, "I perceive your husband in the act of rising to make a speech."

A short, fiery-faced Irishman, with whiskers like silver wires projecting cat-like from his cheeks, stood up to propose the captain's health. Glasses were filled, and the little colonel blazed away. When he had made an end (old Bow steadfastly

watching him all the while with a smile of mingled incredulity and delight), the skipper's health was drunk with cheers and to the song of "He's a jolly good fellow," the air of which was caught up by the ship's company forward, and re-echoed to the cuddy with hurricane lungs from the forecastle. Then old Bow rose straight and unbending in his tightly-buttoned coat on to his thin shanks; but at that moment there was a movement of a little group of the stewards at my end of the table; the colonel's lady by my side was whispering with animation to what was in those days called a "griffin," a handsome young fellow seated on her left; and being half dead with heat, and in no temper to listen to old Bow, whose preliminary coughs and slow gaze around the table threatened a very heavy bestowal of tediousness, I slipped off my chair, sneaked through the jumble of stewards, and in a moment was ascending the poop ladder, breathing with delight the night atmosphere of the sea, that tasted cold as a draught of mountain water after the hot, food-flavoured air of the cuddy.

Forward the sailors had come to a stand, and were talking, smoking, drinking, and eating by the will-o'-the-wisp glare of the few lanterns which hung that way. There was nobody aft, saving the helmsman and the second officer, who had turned out to relieve the chief mate that he might join the supper party. He lay over the rail abreast of the

wheel, and I could hear him quietly singing. The lanterns burnt brightly; against the brilliant atmospheric haze of moonshine to larboard—*larboard* was then the word—the bunting which walled the poop glistened like oiled paper. The monotonous voice of old Bow was still returning thanks; again and again his deep sea notes were broken by loud cheers. The life below, the speechifying and the huzzaing there, the brightness of the light, the frequent chink of glasses, put a wild sort of mocking look into the emptiness of this deck with its lanterns swaying to the roll of the ship, and the motionless figure of the steersman showing unreal, like some image of the fancy, down at the end of the vessel, through the vista of bunting and kaleidoscopic light and white awning framing a star-studded square of dark ether over the taffrail.

Yet I still wanted air. The poop was smothered up with flags and canvas; the cross-jack was furled, spanker brailed up, and the mainsail hung from its yard in festoons to the grip of its gear. There was no wing of canvas therefore near the deck to fan a draught along, and so it came into my head to jump aloft and see what sort of coolness of dew and dusk were to be had in the maintop. I got on to the rail and laid hold of the main shrouds, and leisurely travelled up the rat-lines. Methought it was as good as climbing a hill for the change of

temperature the ascent gave me. The iron of the futtock shrouds went through and through me in a delicious chill, and with the smallest possible effort I swung myself over the rim of the top and stood upon the platform, rapturously drinking in the gushings of air which came in little gusts to my face out of the pendulum beat of the great main-topsail against the mast to the tender swing of the tall fabric.

If ever you need to know what a deep sense of loneliness is like, go aloft in a dead calm when the shadow of the night lies heavy upon the breathless ocean, and from the altitude of top, cross-tree or yard, look down and around you! The spirit of life is always strong in the breeze or in the gale of wind. There are voices in the rigging: there is the organ note of the billow flung foaming from the ship's side; there is a tingling vitality in the long floating rushes of the fabric bursting through one head of yeast into another. All this is company, along with the spirit shapes of the loose scud flying wild, or the sociable procession of large, slow clouds. But up aloft in such a clock-calm as lay upon the deep that night you are *alone!* and the lonelier for the distant sounds which rise from the decks—the dim laugh, the faint call, liker to the memories of such thing than the reality.

The body of the ship lay thin and long far beneath me like a black plank, pallid aft with the

spread of awning, with an oblong haze of light in the main hatch where the grating was lifted, and dots of weak flame from the lanterns forward, resembling bulbous corposants hovering about the forecastle rail. The ship's hull, by the broad raining of the moonshine, was complexioned to the aspect of the leaf of the silver tree when lighted by the stars. Yet as she slightly rolled, breaking the black water from her side into ripples, you saw the phosphor starting and winking in the ebony profound there, like the reflection of sheet-lightning. Exquisitely lulling was the tender pinion-like flapping of the light, moonlit canvas, soaring spire-fashion in ivory spaces high above my head, with the pattering of dew falling from the cloths as they swayed. A sound of thin cheering from the cuddy floated to me; presently a fiddle struck up somewhere forwards, and a manly voice began *Tom Bowline.* Now, thought I, if they would only strip the poop of its awning, that I might see them dancing by the lantern light when supper was over, and they had fallen to caper-cutting afresh! What a scene of pigmy revelry *then!* What a vision of Lilliputian enjoyment!

I seated myself Lascar-fashion and lighted a cigar. Could I have distinguished the figure of a midshipman below I should have hailed him, and sent down the end of a line for a draught of seltzer and brandy. But the repose up here, the dewy

coolness, the royal solitude of the still, majestic night, with sentinel stars drowsily winking along the sea-line, and the white planet of the moon sailing northwards into the west amid the wide eclipse of its own soft silver glory, were all that my fevered being could pray for.

It is as likely as not that after a little I was nodding somewhat drowsily. I recollect that my cigar went out, and that on sucking at it and finding it out I would not be at the trouble of lighting it again. I say I might have been half-asleep sitting, still Lascar-fashion, with my back against the head of the lower-mast, when on a sudden, something—soft, indeed, but amazingly heavy—struck me full on the face and chest, and fell upon my knees where it lay like a small feather-bed. But for my back being supported, I must have been stretched at full length and, for all I know, knocked clean overboard, or, worse still, hurled headlong to the deck.

I was so confounded by the shock and the blow that for some moments I sat goggling the object, that lay as lead upon my knees, like a fool. I then threw it from me, and stood up. It fell where a slant of moonshine lay clear upon the side of the top, and I perceived that it was a big sea-bird, as large as a noddy, white as snow saving the margin of its wings, which were of a velvet black. It had a long, curved beak, and I gathered from the look

of one of its pinions, which overlaid the body as though broken, that its width of wing must have come proportionately very near to that of the albatross. I could see by the moonshine that the eyes were closing by the slow drawing down of a white skin. The creature did not stir. I stood staring at it full five minutes, gripping the topmast

rigging to provide against its rolling me out of the top should it rise suddenly and strike out with its wings, but there was no stir of life in it. It was then that I caught sight of something which seemed to glitter in the thick down upon its breast like a dewdrop on thistledown. It was a little

square case of white metal, apparently a tobacco-box, secured to the bird's neck. By this time the passengers had come up from supper, and were dancing again on the poop. I could see nothing for the awning, but the music was audible enough, and I could also catch the sliding sounds of feet travelling over the hard planks, and the gay laughter of hearts warmed by several toasts. The Jacks were also at work forward. An occasional note of tipsy merriment, I would think, rose up from that part of the ship; but there was no lack of earnestness in the toe and heeling there; the slap of the sailors' feet upon the decks sounded like the clapping of hands; and I could just catch a glimpse of the figure of the fiddler in the obscurity which overlaid the booms quivering and swaying as he sawed, as though the noise he made was driving him crazy.

I seized the big bird by the legs and found its weight by no means so considerable as I should have supposed from the blow it dealt me. So, tightly binding its webbed feet with my pocket-handkerchief, that they might serve me as a handle, I dropped with this strange, dead sea-messenger through the wide square of the lubber's hole into the main shrouds, and leisurely descended. The chief mate stood at the head of the starboard poop ladder as I reached the rail.

"Hillo!" he called out, "good sport there, Mr.

Catesby. What star have you been shooting over pray? And what *is* it, may I ask? *turkey?*"

A shout of this sort was enough to bring everybody running to look. The music ceased, the dancing abruptly stopped. In a moment I was surrounded by a crowd of ladies and gentlemen shoving and exclaiming as they gathered about the skylight upon which I had laid the big seafowl.

"What is it, Mr. Catesby? My stars! a handsome bird surely," exclaimed Captain Bow.

"Oh, Captain," cried a young lady, "is the beautiful creature dead really?"

"See!" shouted a military man, "the creature's breast is decorated with a crucifix. No, damme, it's a trick of the light. What is it, though?"

"A silver pouncebox, I declare," exclaimed a tall, stout lady, with a knowing nod of the feather in her head.

"A sailor's nickel tobacco-box more like, ma'am," observed the mate, "with some castaway's writing inside, or that bird's a crocodile."

"Let's have the story of the thing, Mr. Catesby," said the captain.

I briefly stated that I had ascended to the maintop to breathe the cool air up there and that whilst I was nodding the bird had dashed against me and fallen dead across my knees.

"Oh, how dreadful!" "Oh how interesting!"

"Oh, I wonder the fright didn't make you faint, Mr. Catesby!" and so on, and so on from the young ladies.

"Shall I cast the seizing of the box adrift, sir?" said the mate.

"Ay," responded the captain.

The officer with his knife severed the laniard of sennit and made to lift the lid of the box. But this proved a long job, inexpressibly vexatious to the thirsty expectations of the onlookers owing to the lid fitting so tightly as to resist, as though soldered, the blade of the knife. When opened at last, there was disclosed, sure enough, inside, a piece of paper folded, apparently a leaf from a logbook.

"Bring a lantern, some one," roared the mate.

Some one held a light close to the officer, who exclaimed, after opening the sheet and gazing at it a little, "Any lady or gentleman here understand Spanish?"

"I do," exclaimed the handsome young "griffin" who had sat next to the colonel's lady at table.

"Will you kindly translate this then?" said the mate, handing him the letter.

"It's French," said the young fellow; "no matter; I can read French."

He ran his eye over the page, coughed, and read aloud as follows:—

"*La Mulette*, June 12th, 18—. This brig was dismasted in a hurricane ten days since. Three of

us survive. At the time of our destruction our latitude was 8° south, and longitude 81° 10′ east. Should this missive fall into the hands of any master or mate of a ship he is implored in the name of God and of the Holy Virgin to search for and to succour us. He will be richly——"

"Last words illegible," said the young fellow, holding the paper close to his nose.

"Humph!" exclaimed Captain Bow. He hummed over the latitude and longitude, and addressing the mate said, "The wreck should not be far off, Mr. Pike."

"Oh, captain, *will* you search for the poor, poor creatures?" cried one of the younger of the married ladies.

"Twelfth of June the date is, hey?" said the captain, "and this is the eighteenth. In six days the deluge, madam—at sea. Well, we shall keep a bright look-out, I promise you. D'ye want to keep the bird, Mr. Catesby?"

"No," said I, "the box will suffice as a memorial."

"Then, Mr. Pike, let it be hove overboard," said the captain.

"Strike up '*Tom Bowline*' for its interment," cried the little Irish Colonel, "'*Faithful below he did his duty*,' you know. Nearly knocked poor Catesby overboard, though. What is it, a Booby?"

"How *can* ye be so rude, Desmond?" said his wife.

"'Tis the bird I mane, my love," he answered.

The girls would not let it be hove overboard for a good bit. They hung over the snow-white creature caressing its delicate down and strong feathers with fingers whose jewels glittered upon the plumage like raindrops in moonlight. However ere long the music started anew. The people that still hovered about the bird drew off, and the mate sneaking the noble creature to the side quietly let it fall.

Well, next day, I promise you, this incident of the bird gave us plenty to talk about. In fact it even swamped the memory of the dance and the supper, and again and again you would see one or another of the ladies sending a wistful glance round the sea-line, in search of the dismasted brig—as often looking astern as ahead, whilst one or two of the young fellows amongst us crept very gingerly aloft, holding on as they went as though they would squeeze all the tar out of the shrouds, just to make sure that there was nothing in sight. However, there was a professional look-out kept forward. I heard the captain give directions to the officer of the watch to send a man on to the fore-royal yard from time to time to report if there was anything in view; but as to altering his course with the chance of picking up the Frenchman, *that* was not to be expected in old Bow, whose business was to get to Bombay as fast as the wind would blow him

along; and indeed, seeing that the *Ruby* had already been hard upon four months from the river Thames, you will suppose that, concerned as we might all feel about the fate of *La Mulette*, the softest-hearted amongst us would have been loth to lose even a day in a search that was tolerably certain to prove fruitless—as the mate proved to a group of us whilst he stood pointing out our situation and the supposed position of the brig upon a chart of the Indian Ocean lying open upon the skylight.

We got no wind till daybreak of the morning following the dance, and then a pleasant air came along out of south-south-east, which enabled the *Ruby* to expand her stunsails and she went floating over the long sapphire swells of the fervid ocean under an overhanging cloud of cloths which whitened the water to starboard of her, till it looked like a sheet of quicksilver draining there. This breeze held and shoved the ponderous bows of the Indiaman through it at the rate of some four or five miles in the hour. So we jogged along, till it came to the fourth day from the date of my adventure in the maintop. The fiery breeze had by this time crept round to off the starboard bow, and the ship was sailing along with her yards as fore and aft as they would lie. It was a little before the hour of noon. The captain and mates were ogling the sun through their sextants on either hand the poop, for

the luminary hung pretty nearly over the royal truck with a wake of flaming gold under him broadening to our cutwater, so that the *Ruby* looked to be stemming some burning river of glory flowing through a strange province of dark blue land.

Suddenly high aloft from off the maintop-gallant-yard—whose arm was jockeyed by the figure of a sailor doing something with the clew of the royal—came a clear, distant cry of "Sail ho!" and I saw the man levelling his marline-spike at an object visible to him a little to the right of the flying-jibboom end.

"Aloft there!" bawled the mate, putting his hand to the side of his mouth, "how does she show, my lad?"

"'Tis something black, sir," cried the man, making a binocular glass of his fists. "'Tis well to the starboard of the dazzle upon the water. It is too blinding that way to make sure."

"Something black!" shouted the little colonel, whose Christian name was Desmond, "*La Mulette*, Captain Bow, without doubt. Anybody feel inclined to bet?"

Some wagering followed, whilst I stepped below for a telescope of my own, and then went forward and got into the fore-rigging, with the glass slung over my shoulders. There was no need to ascend above the top. I levelled the telescope when I gained that platform, and instantly saw the object

with a handbreadth of the gleam of the blue sea past her, showing that she was well this side of the horizon from the elevation of the foremast, and that she would be visible from the poop in a little while. There was but a very light swell on; the spires of the *Ruby* floated steadily through the blue atmosphere. I had no difficulty in commanding the object therefore, and the powerful lenses of my telescope brought her close. It was a wreck, a sheer hulk indeed, and without a shadow of a doubt *La Mulette.* Her masts were gone, though a fragment of bowsprit remained. Whole lengths of her bulwark were apparently crushed flat to the covering-board; nevertheless, the hulk preserved a sort of rakish aspect, a piratical sheer of long, low side. "Let her prove what she will," thought I, "I am a Dutchman if yonder craft hasn't carried a bitter and poisonous sting in her head and tail in her time."

They had "made" eight bells on the poop, and the mellow chimes were sounding upon the quarter-deck, and echoing in the silent squares of canvas, as I descended the rigging and made my way aft. I told Captain Bow that the craft ahead was a hulk, and without doubt *La Mulette;* on hearing which the passengers went in a rush to the side and stood staring as though the object was close aboard, some of them pointing and swearing they could see her, though at the rate at which we were shoving through

it she was a fair hour and a half yet behind the horizon from the altitude of the poop.

However, when I came up from tiffin some little while before two o'clock, the hulk lay bare upon the sea over the starboard cathead, with a light like the flash of a gun breaking from her wet black side to the languid roll of her sunwards, and a crowd of steerage-passengers and sailors forward staring at her. At any time a wreck at sea, washing about in the heart of some great ocean solitude, will appeal with solemn significance to the eye of one sailing past it. What dreadful tragedy has she been the little theatre of? you wonder. You speculate upon the human anguish she memorializes, upon the dark and scaring horrors her shape *may* entomb. But it is a sight to appeal with added force to people who have been at sea for many long weeks, without so much as the glimpse of a sail for days at a time to break the enormous monotony of the ocean, or to furnish a fugitive human interest to the ever-receding sea-line—that most mocking of all earthly limitations.

"Anybody see any signs of life aboard of her?" asked Captain Bow. "My sight is not what it was."

There were many sharp young eyes amongst us, and some powerful glasses; but there was nothing living to be seen. She looked to have been a vessel of about two hundred and fifty tons. Her copper sheathing rose to the bends, and was fresh and

bright. She had apparently been pierced for ten guns, but this could be only conjecture, seeing that her bulwarks had been torn to pieces by the fall of her spars. There was a length of topmast, or what-not, riding by its gear alongside of her, with a raffle of canvas and running rigging littering the fore-part. Her wheel stood and her rudder seemed sound. She was flush-decked, but all erections such as caboose, companion, and so forth were gone. Yet she sat with something of buoyancy on the water, and her rolling was without the stupefaction you notice in hulls gradually filling. As her stern lifted, the words, *La Mulette, Havre*, rose in long, white letters upon the counter, with a sort of ghastliness in the blank stare of them by contrast with the delicate blue of the sea. Old Bow hailed her loudly; then the mate roared to her with the voice of a bull, but to no purpose. I said to the second mate, who stood alongside of me at the rail—

"Yonder to be sure is the ship from which the sea-bird brought the letter the other night. There were three living men aboard her a few days ago. Are they below, think you?"

"Been taken off, sir, I expect," he answered. 'Or dead of hunger, or thirst, and lying corpses in the cabin. Or maybe they drowned themselves. Mr. Pike's hail was something to bring a dying man out of his bunk to see what made it. No, sir, yonder's an abandoned craft or a coffin anyway."

Some ladies standing near overheard this, and at once went to work to induce the captain to bring the *Ruby* to a stand, and send a boat. I listened to them entreating him; he shook his head good-naturedly, with a glance into the north-western quarter of the sea. "Oh, but, dear captain," the ladies reasoned, "after that letter, you know, as though you were appointed by Providence to receive it—surely, surely, you will not sail away from that wreck without making quite sure there is nobody on board her! Only conceive that the three poor creatures may be dying in the cabin, that they may have heard your cry and Mr. Pike's, that they may be able even to *see* this ship through a porthole, and yet be too weak to crawl on deck to show themselves!" What followed was lost to me by the second mate beginning to talk:—

"She'll have been a French privateer," he said to me. "What a superb run, sir! Something in her heyday not to be easily shaken of a merchantman's skirts. Of course she'll have thrown all her guns overboard in the hurricane. Does the capt'n mean to overhaul her, I wonder," he continued, throwing a look aloft. "He'll have to bear a hand and make up his mind or we shall be losing her anon in yonder thickness. Mark the depression in the ocean line nor'-west, sir. D'ye notice the swell gathers weight too, and there's a dustiness in the face of the sky that way that's better than a hint

that the Bay of Bengal is not so many leagues distant ahead as it was a month ago."

He was rattling on in this fashion, more like one thinking aloud than talking to a companion, when there was a sudden clapping of hands among the ladies who surrounded the captain, and at the same moment I heard him tell the mate to swing the topsail to the mast and get one of the starboard quarter-boats manned. All was then bustle for a few minutes, the mate bawling, the sailors singing out at the ropes, men manœuvring with the boats' gripes and falls. I went up to the captain.

"Who has charge of the boat?" said I.

"Second mate," he answered.

"May I accompany him, captain?"

"Certainly, Mr. Catesby. I will only ask you, should you board her, to look alive. The weather shows a rather suspicious front down there," indicating with a nod of his head the quarter to which the second mate had called my attention. "But, bless my heart! there'll be nothing to see, nothing worth sending for. It is only to please the ladies, you know."

I sprang into the boat as she swang at the davits.

It was a trip, a treat, a pleasant break for me; besides, my being the first to receive the letter gave me a kind of title as it were to the adventure.

"There's room for others," said the second mate

standing erect in the stern sheets with a wistful glance at a knot of pretty faces at the rail.

There was no response from male or female. "Lower away now lively, lads," cried the mate. Down sank the boat, the blocks were dexterously unhooked, out flashed the oars and away we went.

I couldn't have guessed what weight there was in this ocean swell till I felt the volume of it from the low seat of the ship's quarter-boat. The *Ruby* looked to be rolling on it as heavily again as she seemed to have been when I was on her deck, and the beat of her canvas against the mast rang in volleys through the air like the explosion of batteries up there. The wreck came and went as we sank and soared, and I caught the second mate eying her somewhat anxiously as though theorizing to himself upon the safest dodge to board her. She was farther off than I should have deemed possible, so deceptive is distance at sea, and though the five seamen pulled cheerily, the job of measuring the interval between the two craft, what with the voluminous heave of the swell running at us, and what with the roasting sunshine that lay like a sense of paralysis in one's back bone, proved very tedious to my impatience to come at the hulk and explore her. As we swept round under her stern, supposing that her starboard side would be clear of wreckage, I glanced at the *Ruby* and saw that they were clewing up her royals, and hauling

down her flying jib with hands on the cross-jack-yard rolling the sail up. There were spars and a litter of trailing gear on either side the hulk ; every roll was a spiteful snapping at the ropes with a drag of the floating sticks which sometimes made the water foam.

"We must board her astern," said the mate "and stand by for a handsome dip of the counter.'

"Our approach was very cautious ; indeed it was necessary to manœuvre very gingerly indeed. We got on to the quarter, and watching his chance the bow oarsman cleverly sprang through the crushed rail as the deck buoyantly swang down to the heave of the boat, carrying the end of the painter with him ; the mate followed, and I after a tolerably long interval, wanting perhaps the nerve and certainly the practised limbs of the sailors. In truth I may as well say here that I should have stuck to the boat and waited for the mate's report but for the dislike of being laughed at when I returned. I very well knew I should not be spared, least of all by those amongst the passengers who would have forfeited fifty pounds rather than quitted the ship.

The hull had a desperately wrecked look inboards with the mess of ropes, staves, jagged ends, crushed rails, rents manifesting the fury of the hurricane. I swept a glance along in expectation of beholding a dead body, or, if you will, some scarcely living

though yet breathing man; but nothing of the kind was to be seen. The mate hung his head over the companion hatch from which the cover had been clean razed and peered down, then shouted and listened. But no other sound followed than the long moan and huge washing sob of the swell brimming to the wash-streak with a dim sort of choking, gurgling noise as of water streaming from side to side in the hold.

"Hardly worth while exploring those moist bowels, I think. sir," said the mate.

"Oh, yes," said I, "if we don't take a peep under deck what will there be to tell? This is a quest of the ladies' making, remember, and it must be a complete thing or 'stand by' as you sailors say."

"Right you are, sir," said he, "and so here goes," and with that he put his foot upon the companion ladder and dropped into the cabin.

I followed at his heels, and both of us came to a stand at the bottom of the steps whilst we stared round. There was plenty of light to see by streaming down through the skylight aperture and the hatch. The cabin was a plain, snuff-coloured room with a few sleeping berths running forward, a rough table somewhat hacked and cut about as if with the slicing of tobacco, a row of lockers on either hand, a stand of firearms right aft and some twenty cutlasses curiously stowed in a sort of brackets under the ceiling or upper deck. Hot as

it was above, the cabin struck chill as though it were an old well. Indeed you saw that it had been soused over and over again by the seas which had swept the vessel, and there was a briny, seaweedy flavour in the atmosphere of it that made you think of a cave deep down in a sea-fronting cliff. We looked into the sleeping berths going forward to where a moveable bulkhead stopped the road. It was not easy to walk ; the increasing weight of the swell was defined by the heavy though comparatively buoyant rolling of the hull. The deck went in slopes like the roof of a house from side to side with now and again an ugly jerk that more than once came near to throwing me when a sudden yawn forced the dismasted fabric into a swift recovery.

"There's nobody aft here, anyway," said the mate ; "no use troubling ourselves to look for her papers, I think, sir."

"No ; but this is only one end of the ship," I answered. "There may be a discovery to make forward. Can't we unship that bulk head there, and so get into the 'tween-decks?"

We laid hold of the frame, and after peering a bit, for this part of the cabin lay in gloom, we found that it stood in grooves, and without much trouble we slided it open, and the interior to as far as a bulkhead that walled off a bit of forecastle lay clear before us in the daylight shining through the

main-hatch Here were a number of hammocks dangling from the deck, and some score or more of seamen's chests and bags in heaps, some of them split open, with quantities of rough wearing apparel scattered about, in so much that I never could have imagined a scene of wilder disorder, nor one more suggestive of hurry and panical consternation and delirious headlong behaviour.

"Nobody here, sir," said the mate.

"No," I answered; "I suppose her people left her in their boats, and that one of the wretches who were forced to remain behind wrote the letter we received the other night."

"At sea," said the mate, "there is no imagining how matters come about. I allow that the three men have been taken off by some passing vessel. Anyway, we've done our bit, and the capt'n, I expect, 'll be waiting for us. Thunder! how she rolls," he cried, as a very heavy lurch sent us both reeling towards the side of the craft.

"Hark!" cried I, "we are hailed from the deck."

"Below there!" shouted a voice in the companion hatch. "They've fired a gun aboard the Indiaman, sir, and have run the ensign up half-mast high. The weather looks mighty queer, sir."

"Ha!" cried the mate; "come along, Mr. Catesby."

We walked cautiously and with difficulty aft,

gained the companion ladder and ascended. My instant glance went to the *Ruby*. She had furled her mainsail and fore and mizzen top-gallant-sails, hauled down her lighter staysails and big standing jib, and as I glanced at her a gun winked in a quarter-deck port, and the small thunder of it rolled sulkily up against the wind. In fact, whilst we were below, the breeze had chopped clean round and the *Ruby* was to leeward of the wreck, with a very heavy swell rolling along its former course, the wind dead the other way, beginning to whiten the ridges on each huge round-backed fold, and a white thickness—a flying squall of vapour it looked to me, with a seething and creaming line of water along the base of it as though it was something solid that was coming along—sweeping within half-a-mile of the wreck right down upon us. The mate sent a look at it and uttered a cry.

"Haul the boat alongside," he shouted to the fellows in her. "Handsomely now, lads. Stand by to jump into her," he cried to the seaman who had been the first to spring on board the wreck with the end of the line.

They brought the boat humming and buzzing to the counter; the sailor standing on the taffrail plumped into her like a cannon-shot; 'twas wonderful he didn't scuttle her. The mate whipping the painter off the pin or whatever it was that it had been belayed to, held it by a turn whilst he

bawled to me to watch my chance and jump. But the wreck lying dead in the trough was rolling in a quite frenzied way, like a see-saw desperately worked. Her movements, combined with the soaring and falling of the boat, were absolutely confounding. I would gather myself together for a spring and then, before I could make it, the boat was sliding as it might seem to me twenty or thirty feet deep and away.

"Jump, for God's sake, sir!" cried the mate.

"I don't mean to break my neck," I answered, irritable with the nervous flurry that had come to me with a sudden abominable sense of incapacity and helplessness.

As I spoke the words, sweep! came the white smother off the sea over us with a spiteful yell of wind of a weight that smote the cheek a blow which might have forced the strongest to turn his back. The hissing, and seething, and crackling of the spume of the first of the squall was all about us in a breath, and, in the beat of a heart, the *Ruby*, and the ocean all her way vanished in the wild and terrifying eclipse of the thick, silvery, howling, steam-like mist.

"By ——, I have done it *now!*" cried the mate.

The end of the painter had been dragged from his hand or he had let it fall! And the wind catching the boat blew her over the swell like the shadow of a cloud. The seamen threw their oars

over and headed for us, their faces pale as those of madmen.

"They'll never stem this weather," cried the mate; "follow me, Mr. Catesby, or we are dead men."

He tore off his coat, kicked off his boots and went overboard without another word.

Follow him! To the bottom, indeed! but nowhere else, for I could not swim a stroke. But that was not quite it. Had I had my senses I might have grasped the first piece of wreckage I could put my hand upon and gone after him with it to paddle and hold on to till I was picked up. But all this business coming upon us so suddenly, along with the sudden blinding of me by the vapour, the distracting yelling of the wind and the sickening bewilderment caused by the wreck's violent rolling, seemed to have driven my wits clean out of my head. The boat was scarcely more than a smudge in the thickness, vanishing and showing as she swept up and rushed down the liquid acclivities, held with her bow towards the hulk by the desperately-plied oars of the rowers. The mate was borne down rapidly towards her. I could just see three of the sailors leaning over the side to drag him out of the water; the next instant the little fabric had vanished in the thickness, helplessly and with horrible rapidity blown out of sight the moment the men ceased rowing to rescue their officer.

I do not know how long all this may have occupied ; a few minutes maybe sufficed for the whole of the tragic passage. I stood staring and staring, incredulous of the truth of what had befallen me, and then with an inexpressible sickness of heart I flung myself down upon the deck under the lee of a little space of bulwark, too dizzy and weak with the horror that possessed me to maintain my footing on that wildly swaying platform.

I had met in my travels with but one specimen of such weather as this ; it was off the Cape of Good Hope to the westward ; the ship was under topmast and topgallant studding sails, when, without an interval of so much as twenty seconds of calm, she was taken right aback by a wind that came with the temper of half a gale in it, whilst as if by magic a fog, white and dense as wool, was boiling and shrieking all about her.

For some time my consternation was so heavy that I sat mechanically staring into that part of the thickness where the boat had disappeared, without giving the least heed to the sea or to the wreck. It was *then* blowing in earnest, the ocean still densely shrouded with flying vapour, and an ugly bit of a sea racing over the swell that rolled its volumes to windward. A smart shock and fall of water on to the forecastle startled me into sudden perception of a real and imminent danger. The fore-scuttle was closed, but the main and

companion hatchways yawned open to the weather; there were no bulwarks worth talking of to increase the wreck's height of side, and to hinder the free tumbling of the surge on to the decks, so if the wind increased and the sea grew heavier, the hulk must inevitably fill and go down like a thunderbolt!

It would be idle to try to express the thoughts which filled me. I was like one stunned: now casting an eye at the sea to observe if the billows were increasing, now with a heart of lead watching the water frothing upon the deck, as the hull heaved from one side to the other; then straining my sight with a mad passion of eagerness into the vapour that shut off all view of the ocean to within a cable's length of me. There was nothing to be done. Even could I have met with tarpaulins, there was no sailor's skill in me to spread and secure them over the open hatches. However, when an hour had passed in this way, I took notice of a small failure of the wind, though there was no lightening of the impenetrable mist. The folds of the swell had diminished, and the sea was running steadily; the hull with her broadside dead in the trough, rose and fell with regularity, and though at long intervals the surge struck her bow, and blew in crystals over the head, or tumbled in scores of bucketfuls upon the deck, nothing more than spray wetted the after-part of her.

It was now six o'clock in the evening. In two hours' time the night would have come down, and if the weather did not clear, the blackness would be that of the tomb. What would the *Ruby* do? Remain hove-to and wait for moonlight or for day-break to seek for me? A fragment of comfort I found in remembering that the wreck's position would be known to Captain Bow and his mates, so that their search for me, if they searched at all, ought not to prove fruitless; though to be sure much would depend upon the drift of the hulk. Presently, fearing that there might be no water or provisions on board, I was seized with a sudden thirst, bred by the mere apprehension that I might come to want a drink. There was still light enough to enable me to search the interior, and now I suppose something of my manhood must have returned to me, for I made up my mind to waste no moment of the precious remaining time of day in imaginations of horror and of death and in dreams of desperate despondency. I went on my hands and knees to the hatch, lest if I stood up I should be knocked down by the abrupt rolling of the craft, and entered the cabin. On deck all was naked and sea-swept from the taffrail to the "eyes," and if there were aught of drink or of food to be had it must be sought below. I recollected that one of the forward berths or cabins, which the second mate and I had looked into, had shown in the gloom as

a sort of pantry ; that is to say, in peering over my companion's shoulders, I had caught a glimpse of crockery on shelves, the outlines of jars and so forth. But the inspection had been very swift, scarce more than a glance. I made for this cabin now, very well remembering that it was the last of a row of three or four on the starboard side. I opened the door, and secured it by its hook to the bulkhead that I might see, and after rummaging a little I found a cask of ship's bread, a small cask (like a harness cask) a quarter full of raw pickled pork, a jar of vinegar, two large jars of red wine, and best of all, a small barrel about half full of fresh water, slung against the bulkhead, with a little wooden tap fixed in it, for the convenience as I supposed of drawing for cabin use. There were other articles of food, such as flour, pickles, dried fruit, and so on ; the catalogue would be tedious, nor does my memory carry it.

I poured some wine into a tin pannikin, and found it a very palatable, sound claret. I mixed me a draught with cold water, and ate a biscuit with a little slice of some kind of salt sausage, of which there lay a lump in a dish, and found myself extraordinarily refreshed. I cannot tell you indeed how comforted I was by this discovery of provisions and fresh water, for now I guessed that if the weather did not drown the wreck, I might be able to support life on board of her until the *Ruby*

took me off, which I counted upon happening that night if the moon shone, or most certainly next morning at latest. My heart however sank afresh when I regained the deck. The sudden change from the life, the cheerfulness, the security of the Indiaman, to *this*—"Oh, my God! my God!" I remember exclaiming as I sank down under the lee of the fragment of bulwark, with a wild look around into the thickness and along the spray-darkened planks of the heaving and groaning derelict. The loneliness of it! no sounds save the dismal crying of the wind sweeping on high through the atmosphere, and the ceaseless seething and hissing of the dark-green frothing seas swiftly chasing one another out of sight past the wall of vapour that circled the wreck, with the blank and blinding mist itself to tighten as with a sensible ligature into unbearable concentration the dreadful sense of solitude in my soul.

Slowly the wind softened down, very gradually the seas sank, and their worrying note of snarling melted into a gentler tone of fountain-like creaming. But the vapour still filled the air, and so thick did it hang that, though by my watch I knew it to be the hour of sundown, I was unable to detect the least tinge of hectic anywhere, no faintest revelation of the fiery scarlet light which I knew must be suffusing the clear heavens down to the easternmost confines above this maddening blindness of mist.

Then came the blackness of the night. So unspeakably deep a dye it was that you would have thought every luminary above had been extinguished, and that the earth hung motionless in the sunless opacity of chaos out of which it had been called into being. The hours passed. I held my seat on the deck with my back against a bulwark stanchion. It was a warm night with a character as of the heat of steam owing to the moisture that loaded and thickened the atmosphere. Sometimes I dozed, repeatedly starting from a snatch of uneasy slumber to open my eyes with ever-recurring horror and astonishment upon the blackness. Gleams of the sea-fire shot out fitfully at times from the sides of the wreck, and there was nothing else for the sight to rest upon. At midnight it was blowing a small breeze of wind and the sea running gently—at midnight I mean as I could best reckon ; but the darkness remained unchanged, and I might know that the fog was still thick about me by no dimmest spectre of moon or star showing.

I then slept, and soundly too, for two or three hours, and when I awoke it was daylight, the sea clear to the horizon, the sky a soft liquid blue with masses of white vaporous cloud hanging under it like giant bursts of steam, and the sun shining with a sort of misty splendour some degree or two above the sea-line. There was a pleasant air blowing out of the north, with power to wrinkle the water and

no more. My limbs were so cramped that for a long while I was incapable of rising ; when at last my legs had recovered their power I stood erect and swept the ocean with my eyes. But the light blue surface went in undulations naked to the bend of the heavens on all sides. I looked and looked again, but to no purpose. I strained my sight till an intolerable torment in my eyeballs forced me to close my lids. There was nothing in view. I very well remember falling on my knees and grovelling upon the deck in the anguish of my spirit. I had so surely counted on daylight exhibiting the *Ruby* somewhere within the circle which enclosed me that the disappointment which came out of the bald vacancy of the ocean struck me down like a blow from a hammer. Presently I lifted up my head and regained my feet, and feeling thirsty moved with a tread of lead to the yawning hatch, sending the most passionate, yearning glances seaward as I walked, and halting again and again to the vision of some imagination of break in the continuity of the gleaming girdle—some delicate shoulder of remote cloud, some imaginary speck which dissolved upon the blue air whilst my gaze was on it.

I mixed some wine and water, and made a light repast off biscuit and a piece of Dutch cheese that was on the shelf. I then thought I would look into the cabins for a chair to sit upon on deck, for a mattress to lie upon, for something also that might

make me a little awning, and pushed open the door of the berth immediately facing the pantry, as I may call it. The wreck was rolling very lightly, and her decks were now as easy to step as the Indiaman's. This berth contained a bunk and bedding, a sailor's chest, some clothes hanging against the bulkhead, but nothing to serve my turn. The next was similarly furnished, saving that here I took notice that a small quantity of wearing apparel lay about as though scattered in a hurry, and that the lid of a great box, painted a dark green with the letter D in white upon it, had been split open as though the contents were to be rifled, or as though the lock had resisted and there had been no time to coax it save by a chopper. I passed into a third cabin. This had some comfort of equipment in the shape of shelves and a chest of drawers, and had doubtless been the commander's. There was a very handsome telescope on brackets, a few books, a quadrant, a large silver timepiece, a small compass and one or two other matters of a like sort upon a little table fitted by hinges in a corner; there were three chests in a row with a litter of boots and shoes, a soft hat or two, a large handsome cloak costly with fur, and so forth, strewed about the deck.

I was looking with wonder at these articles when my eye was taken by something bright near the smallest of the three chests. I picked it up; it

was an English sovereign. Others lay about as though a handful had been clutched and dropped—here being the same manifestations of terrified hurry as, it seemed to me, I witnessed in the other cabins. The lid of the small chest was split in halves, and the chopper that had seemingly been wielded rested against the side of the box. A massive padlock was still in the staples. I lifted the half of the lid and was greatly astonished by the sight of a quantity of gold pieces lying in divisions of a tray that fitted the upper part of the chest. Each division contained coins of various nations. They were all gold pieces — English, Portuguese, Brazilian and coins of the United States. I prised open the padlocked part of the lid and seized the tray to lift it that I might observe what lay underneath. But the weight of gold in it was so great that I had to exert my utmost strength to raise one end of the tray on to the edge of the box; which done, I was able to slide it along till the bottom of the box was revealed.

The sight of the gold had filled me with expectations of beholding some amazing treasure under the tray. What I there saw was a heap of rough, brick-shaped stuff of a dull, rusty, reddish tint. I grasped a lump, and though I had never seen gold in that form before, I was satisfied by the extraordinary weight of the piece I held that all those coarse,

rough, dull-coloured bricks were of the most precious of metals. I slided the tray back to its place and let fall the two halves of the lid with another look around me for any article that might be useful to me on deck. The excitement kindled by the spectacle of the gold rapidly died away. I dully mused on it, so to speak, whilst my eye roamed, languidly speculating about it, with a strange indifference in my thoughts, concluding that it represented the privateersman's sorted plunder; that in all likelihood when the rush had been made to the boats one or more had split open this chest to fill their pockets, but had been obliged to fly for their lives ere they could find time for more than a scrambling clutch at the tray. But it was the contents no doubt of this chest—if indeed this chest held all the treasure of the buccaneer—that was indicated by the writer of the letter in the concluding line of it, the closing words of which had been found illegible by the young fellow who translated the missive.

I put the telescope under my arm and passed into the cabin, and found a small chair near the arms rack, and near it upon the deck lay a great cotton umbrella, grimy and wet with the saturation of the cabin. I took it up thankfully and carried it with the chair up the steps There was a great plenty of ropes' ends knocking bout. I cut a piece and unlaid the strands, and securing

the umbrella to a stanchion, sat down on the chair under it; and indeed without some such shelter the deck would have been insupportable, for low as the sun still was in the east, his fires were already roasting, and I well knew what sort of temperature was to be expected as he floated higher, leaving my form with a small blotch of southern shadow only yoked to it.

I passed the morning in sweeping the horizon with the telescope. It was a noble glass—a piece of plunder, with an inscription that represented it as a gift from the officers of a vessel to her commander; I forget the names, but recollect they were English. The placidity of the day dreadfully disheartened me. There was but little weight in the languid air to heave the *Ruby* or any other vessel into view. The sea under the sun was like brand new tin for the dazzle of it, and as the morning advanced the heavy, vaporous clouds of daybreak melted out into curls and wisps like to the crescent moon, with a clear sky rising a pale blue from the horizon to overhead to where it swam into the brassy glory which flooded the central heavens. Weary of sitting, and exhausted by looking, I put down the glass and went to the main hatch with the idea of making out what water there was in the hold. The pumps were gone and the wells of them sank like black shafts into the deck. But whatever there was of water in the

hulk lay so low that I could not catch so much as a gleam of it. There was some light cargo in the hold—light as I reckoned by the sit of the wreck upon the water; chiefly white wooden cases, with here and there canvas bales; but whatever might have been the commodities there was not much of them, at least amidships, down into which I stood peering.

I then walked on to the forecastle and lifted the hatch-cover. This interior looked to have been used by the people of *La Mulette* as a sort of sail-locker. The bulkhead extended but a very short distance abaft the hatch, and the deck was stowed with rolls of sails, coils of spare rigging, hawsers, tackle and so forth. I put my head into the aperture and took a long and careful survey of the interior, for the mate and I had not explored this part of the brig, and it was possible, I thought, I might find the bodies of the three survivors here. But there was nothing whatever to be witnessed in that way; so I closed the hatch again and went aft.

The day passed, the light breeze lingered, but it brought nothing into sight. I would think as I sent my glance along the naked, sea-swept, desolate deck, gaunt and skeleton-like, with its ragged exhibition of splintered plank and crushed bulwark, that had there been a mast left in the hull I might from the summit of it be able to see the *Ruby*, whose topmast cloths lay sunk behind the horizon

to the eyes which I levelled from the low side of the wreck. "Oh!" I would cry aloud, "if I could but be sure that she was near me though hidden!" Maddening as the expectation might have been which the sight of her afar would have raised in me, yet the mere having her in view, no matter how dim, deceptive a speck she proved, would have taken a deal of the bitterness, the heart-subduing feeling of hopelessness out of the wild and awful sense of desolation that possessed me.

The sun sank; with the telescope trembling in my hands I made a slow, painful circle of the ocean whilst the western magnificence lay upon it, and then let fall the glass and fell into the chair, and with bowed head and tightly-folded arms, and eyes closed to mitigate by the shadowing of the lids the anguish of the fires which despair had kindled in them—for my heart was parched, no relief of tears came to me—I waited for the darkness of a second night to settle down upon the wreck. But on this day the gloom fell with the brilliance of stars, and some time after eight the moon rose, a moist, purple shield, at whose coming the light draught of wind died out and the ocean flattened into a breathless, polished surface. When presently the moon had soared and whitened, the sea looked as wide again as it was to the showering of her light, brimming the atmosphere with a delicate silver haze; indeed there went a shadowing round about its

confines to the shaft of moonlight on the water that made it seem hollow where the wreck lay, and it was like floating in the vastness of the firmament that bent over it to glance over the side of the hull and see the mirror-like breast studded with reflections of the larger stars, and to follow the shadow of the deep, curled at the extremities as it seemed, to the tropic astral dust that twinkled there like dew trembling to the breath of a summer night wind.

I had brought up some blankets from below and these I made a kind of mattress of under the shelter of the umbrella. It was about ten o'clock, I think, when I threw myself down upon them. A pleasant breeze was then blowing directly along the wake of moonlight, and the water was rippling like the murmurs of a brook against the sides of the pale, silent, gently-rolling hull. I lay awake for a long time listening to this cool, refreshing, tinkling sound of running ripples, with a mind somewhat weakened by my distress. Indeed, many thoughts wearing a complexion of delirium passed through my head with several phantasies which must have frightened me as a menace of madness had my wits been equal to the significance of them. For example, I can recall seeing, as I believed, the *Ruby* floating up towards the wreck out of the western gloom, luminous as a snow-clad iceberg, with the soft splendour of the

moonshine on her canvas; I recollect this, I say, and that I laughed quietly at the thought of her approach, as though I would ridicule myself for the fears which had been upon me throughout the day; then of jumping up in a sudden transport and passion of delight; when the vision instantly vanished; whereupon a violent fit of trembling seized me, and I sank down again upon the blankets groaning. But the agitation did not linger; some fresh deception of the brain would occur and win my attention to it.

This went on till I fell asleep. Meanwhile the breeze continued to blow steadily, and the rippling of water along the bends was like the sound of the falling of large raindrops.

I awoke, and turning my head towards the forepart of the wreck, I spied the figure of a man erect and motionless on the forecastle. The moon was low in the west; I might guess by her position that daybreak was not far off. By her red light I saw the man. I sat erect and swept a glance round; there was no ship near me, no smudge upon the gloom to indicate a vessel at a distance. Father of heaven! I thought, what *is* it? Could yonder shadowy form be one of the three sailors who had been left on the wreck? Surely I had closely searched the hull; there was nothing living aboard of her but myself. The sweat-drops broke from my brow as I sat motionless with my eyes fixed

upon the figure that showed with an inexpressible ghostliness of outline in the waning moonlight. On a sudden there arose another figure alongside of him, seemingly out of the hard planks of the deck; then a third; and there the three of them stood apparently gazing intently aft at me, but without a stir in their frames, that I could witness. Three of them!

I rose to my feet and essayed to speak, but could deliver no more than a whisper. I tried again, and this time my voice sounded.

"In the name of God, who, and what are you?"

"Ha!" cried one of them. He said something to his companions, in words which were unintelligible to me, then approached, followed by the others, all three of them moving slowly, with a wavering gait, as though giddy.

"Som drink for Christu's sake!" said the man who had called Ha! pointing his finger at his mouth, and speaking in a tone that made one think of his throat as something rough, like a file. By this time it was clear to me they were no ghosts. I imagined them negroes, so dark their faces looked in the dim west rays and failing starlight. Whence they had sprung, in what manner they had arrived, I could not imagine; but it was not for me to stand speculating about them in the face of the husky appeal for drink.

There was a parcel of candles in the pantry—as

I term it. I had a flint and steel in my pocket, and followed by the men, I led the way below, bidding them stand awhile till I obtained a light; and after groping and feeling about with my hands, I found the paper of candles, lighted one, and then called to the men. They arrived. I pointed to the jars, saying in English, there was wine in them; and then to the slung cask of water, and then to the food on the shelves. They instantly grasped each one of them a pannikin, and mixed a full draught and swallowed it, with a strange trembling sigh of relief and delight. They then fell upon the biscuit and sausage, eating like famished wolves, both fists full, and cramming their mouths. They were not very much more distinguishable by the feeble light of the candle than on deck; however, I was able to see they were not blacks. The man who had addressed me was of a deep Chinese yellow, with lineaments of an African pattern, a wide flat nose, huge lips, eyes like little shells of polished ebony glued on porcelain. His hair was the negro's, a black wiry wool. He wore a short moustache, the fibres like the teeth of a comb, and there was a tuft of black wool upon his chin. Small gold earrings, a greasy old Scotch cap, a shirt like a dungaree jumper, and loose trousers thrust into a pair of half Wellingtons, completed the attire of the ugliest, most villainous-looking creature I had ever set eyes on. His companions

were long-haired, chocolate-browed Portuguese, or Spaniards—*Dagos* as the sailors call them; I noticed a small gold crucifix sparkling upon the mossy breast of one of them. Their feet were naked, indeed their attire consisted of no more than a pair of duck or canvas breeches, and an open shirt, and a cap. They continued to feed heartily, and several times helped themselves to the wine, though before doing so, the yellow-faced man would regularly point to the jar with a nod, as though asking leave.

"You Englis, sah?" he exclaimed, when he had made an end of eating. I said yes. "How long you been hear, sah?"

I told him. He understood me perfectly though I spoke at length, relating in fact my adventure. I then inquired who he and his companions were, and his story was to the following effect: That he was the boatswain, and the other two, able seamen, of a Portuguese ship called the *Mary Joseph*, bound to Singapore or to some Malay port. The vessel had been set on fire by one of the crew, an Englishman, who was skulking drunkenly below after broaching a cask of rum. They had three boats which they had hoisted out; most of the people got away in the long boat, six men were in the second boat, he and his two comrades got into the jolly-boat. They had with them four bottles of water, and a small bag of ship's bread, and nothing

more. They parted company with the other boats in the night, and had been four days adrift, sailing northwards by the sun as they reckoned, under a bit of a lug, and keeping an eager look-out though they sighted nothing; until a little before sundown that evening, they spied the speck of this wreck, and made for it, but so scant was the wind, and so weak their arms that it had taken them nearly all night to measure the distance, which would be a few miles only. They got their boat under the bow—she was lying there now, he said—and stepped on board one after the other. This explained to me their apparition. Of course I had not seen the boat or heard her as she approached, and to me, lying aft, the three men rising over the bows looked as though, like ghostly essences, they had shaped themselves on the forecastle out through the solid plank.

I addressed the others, but the yellow man told me that their language was a jargon of base Portuguese, of which I should be able to understand no more than here and there a word, even though I had been bred and educated in Lisbon.

"We mosh see to dah boat," he exclaimed, and spoke to his mates, apparently to that effect.

I extinguished the candle, and followed them on deck. It was closer upon daybreak than I had supposed. Already the grey was in the east, like a light filtering through ash-coloured silk, with the

sea-line black as a sweep of India ink against it and the moon a lumpish, distorted mass of faint dingy crimson, dying out in a sort of mistiness westwards, like the snuff of a rushlight in its own smoke. Even whilst the three fellows were manœuvring with the boat over the bow, the tropic day filled the heavens in a bound, and it was broad morning all at once, with a segment of sun levelling a long line of trembling silver from the horizon down to mid-ocean. My first glance was for the *Ruby*, but the sea lay bare in every quarter. The fellows came dragging their boat aft; I looked over and saw that the fabric was of a canoe-pattern, with a queer upcurled bow, and a stern as square as the amid-ship section of the boat; four thwarts, short oars with oval-shaped blades, and a small mast with a square of lugsail lying with its yard in the bottom of the boat.

The yellow man pointing to her exclaimed in a hoarse, throaty, African guttural, "It is good ve keep hor. Dis wreck hov no 'atch; she sink, and vidout hor," nodding at the boat again, "were ve be?"

I said yes, by all means let us secure the boat. He exclaimed that for the present she would lie safely astern, and with that they took a turn with the line that held her and she rested quietly on the sea clear of the quarter.

Forthwith the three fellows began to explore the

hull. The yellow man or boatswain, as I must henceforth call him, said no more to me than this as he pointed to the yawning hatches: "You are gen'elman," with an ugly smile intended no doubt for a stroke of courtesy as he ran his eye over me: "ve are common sailor. Ve vill see to stop dem hole. More fresh vataire to drink ve need. Possib more bee-low. Also tobacco." And thus saying he cried out to the others in their own dialect, and the three of them went to the main hatchway and disappeared down it.

I lifted the telescope and ran it over the sea, then sighed as with a breaking heart I laid the glass down again upon the deck. A strong sense of dismay filled me whilst I sat musing upon the men who were now coolly rummaging the vessel below. The rascality which lay in every line of the ugly yellow ruffian's face, coupled with the stealthy, glittering glances, the greasy, snaky hair, the dark piratic countenances of the others might well have accounted for the apprehension, the actual consternation indeed which fell upon me whilst I thought of them. But that was not all. The recollection of the gold rushed upon me as a memory that had clean gone out of my mind, but that had suddenly flashed back upon me to communicate a sinister significance to the presence of the three Portuguese seamen. I can clearly understand now that my brain, as I had said, had been

weakened by the horror of my situation, and by the long madness of expectation which had held it on fire whilst I searched the sea and waited for the *Ruby* to appear. So that, instead of accepting these three foreign sailors as a kind of godsend with whose assistance I might be enabled to doctor up the wreck so as to fit her to float until help came, not to speak of them as companions in misery, human creatures to talk to, beings whose society would extinguish out of this dreadful situation the intolerable element of solitude—I say instead of viewing these men thus, as might have happened, I believe, had I been my old self, a profound fear of and aversion from them seized me, and such was the state of my nerves at that time, I call to mind that I looked at the boat which hung astern with a sort of hurry in me to leap into her, cast her adrift, and sail away.

With an effort I mastered my agitation, constantly directing glances at the sea with a frequent prayer upon my lip that if not the *Ruby*, then at least some ship to rescue me would heave into view before sundown that night.

The men were a long while below. I stepped softly to the companion hatch, and bent my ear down it that I might know if they had made their way through the 'tween decks bulkhead into the cabin. The chink of money was very distinct, but that was all. Presently, however, I heard them

talking in low voices, but their tongue was Hebrew to me, and I went back to my chair, looking yet again around the sea-line. I think they had been at least an hour below when they arrived on deck, emerging through the main hatch. They then walked forward without taking any notice of me, and disappeared through the fore-scuttle, whence, after a while, they arose bearing amongst them several tarpaulins which they had come across. I took it that there was a carpenter's chest down there, for the yellow boatswain flourished a hammer in one hand, and a box of what proved to be round-headed nails in the other. They carefully secured the hatch with a couple of these tarpaulins, then came to the quarter-deck, and similarly roofed the skylight and the companion hatch, saving that they left free a corner flap to admit of our passage up and down.

"Dis is sailor vork," said the boatswain, giving me a nod, whilst his face shone like a yellow sou'-wester in a squall of wet with the sweat that flooded his repulsive visage. "Dah vataire keep out now, sah."

"It is well done," said I, softening my voice to disguise the emotion of disgust and aversion which possessed me at sight of the ugly, treacherous, askant sort of stare he fastened upon me whilst he spoke. "Have you breakfasted?"

He came close to me before answering; the

other two meanwhile remaining at the hatch and looking towards me.

"Ay," he then said, "dere ish plenty biscuit, plenty vataire, plenty beef," indicating with a grimy thumb a portion of the hold that lay under the cabin floor. "Dere ish plenty gold too," he added in a hoarse, theatrical sort of whisper, with a sudden gleam of his little horrible eyes which to my fancy was as much like the blue flash off some keen and polished blade of poniard as anything I can figure to liken it to.

"Yes," said I carelessly, "plenty I believe. But I must break my own fast now. We shall need fresh water before the day's out, and, praised be the saints, there is plenty of it, you say."

With that I went to the hatch, turned the flap of the tarpaulin and descended, eyed narrowly by the two fellows who stood beside it, and as I gained the interior I heard them say something to the boatswain, who responded with an off-hand sort of *ya, ya!* as though he would quiet a misgiving in them. I made a hurried meal of some wine, biscuit and cheese, and noticing as I passed on my way to the cabin again that the door of the berth in which the chest of gold stood was shut, I tried the handle and found it locked. The key was withdrawn. Smothering a curse upon the hour that had brought these creatures to the wreck, I lighted a cigar (of which I had a leather case half-full in my pocket),

more for the easy look of it than for any need I felt for tobacco just then, and went in a lounge to the shelter of my umbrella. The boatswain was examining the telescope when I arrived. He instantly put it down on perceiving me and went forward to where his mates were. They peered first over one side, pointing and talking, and arguing with amazing volubility and with astonishing contortions; they then crossed to the other side, and looked over and fell into the same kind of hot, eager talk and gesticulations. It was easy to guess that they spoke about the spars which floated, held by their gear, against the wreck. After a bit they came to an agreement, disappeared in the forecastle and returned with tackles and coils of rope. One of them went over the side, and after a while there they were hauling upon purchases and slowly bringing the spar out of water, the boatswain talking and bawling with furious energy the whole while. I went forward to help them, and the yellow ruffian nodded when I seized hold of the rope they were pulling at, and cried with a hoarse roar of laughter, "Yash, yash. Ve make a mast, ve make a yart, and ve put up sail, and ve steer to our own countree and be reech men."

Dagos as they were, they had some trick of seamanship amongst them. There was stump enough left of the foremast to secure the heel of a spar to, and by four o'clock that afternoon, with a

break of but a single half-hour for a meal and a smoke (they had found plenty of pipes and tobacco in the seamen's chests between decks), they had rigged up and stayed a jury-mast and crossed it with a yard manufactured from a boom of the wreckage to larboard ; which, light as the breeze was, yet furnished them with spread of sail enough to give the sheer-hulk steerage way.

I had lent them a hand and done my landsman's best, and had gone aft to rest myself and to sweep the sea with the telescope for the hundredth time that day. The three men were below getting some supper. The hull was stirring through the water at a snail's pace to a weak, hot wind blowing right over her taffrail out of the south-east. The helm was amidships, and her short length of oil-smooth wake showed her going straight without steering. I could distinctly hear the men conversing in the cabin. I reckoned because they knew their lingo was unintelligible to me that they talked out. There was a fiery eagerness in the tones they sometimes delivered themselves in, but earnestly as I listened I could catch no meaning but that of their imprecations, which readily enough took my ear owing to a certain resemblance between them and Spanish and Italian oaths. A short interval of silence followed. All three then came on deck, one of them carrying a jar and another a canvas bag. I in-

stantly observed that every man of them had girded a cutlass to his side. They seemed to avoid my gaze as they walked to the pin to which the line that connected the boat was belayed, and hauled her alongside. I threw away my cigar and stood up. The first idea that occurred to me was, they were going to victual the boat, sway the chest of gold into her and sail away from me; and I cannot express with what devotion I prayed to my Maker that this might prove so. I looked from one to the other of them. Once I caught a side-long glance from the boatswain; otherwise they went to this business as though I were not present, talking in rough, hurried whispers, with an occasional exclamation from the yellow ruffian, that was like saying, "Make haste!" When the boat was alongside one of them dropped into her, and received the jar and bag from the other. He then returned, and the moment he was inboards the boatswain, rounding upon me, drew his cutlass and pointed to the boat.

"Be pleashed to get in and go away!" he exclaimed.

"Go away!" I echoed, too much thunderstruck by the villain's order to feel or witness the horror of the fate designed for me. "What have I done that you should——?"

He interrupted me with a roar. "Go quick!" he cried, lifting his weapon as though to strike, "or I kill you!"

The hands of the others groped at the hilts of their cutlasses ; all three eyed me now, and there was murder in every man's look. Without a word I stepped to the side, and sprang into the boat. One of them threw the line off the pin into the sea. "Hoise your sail and steer that way, or we shoot!" bellowed the yellow ruffian, waving his cutlass towards the sea astern. God knows there were small arms enough in the cabin to enable them to fulfil *that* threat. I grasped the halliards, mast-headed the little lug, and throwing an oar over the stern, sculled the boat's head round, and in a minute was slipping away from the hull, at the stern of which the three men stood watching me, the blade in the boatswain's hand shining to the sun like a wand of fire as he continued to point with it into the south-east.

Here now was I adrift in the mighty heart of the Indian Ocean in a small boat like a canoe, so shaped that she was little likely to lie close to the wind ; hundreds of leagues from the nearest point of land, and in a part of the deep navigated in those days at long intervals only—I mean by the Dutch and English traders to the east ; for the smaller vessels kept a much more westerly longitude than where I was, after rounding the Cape ; often striking through the Mozambique or so climbing as to keep Mauritius aboard. Never was human being in a more wildly-desperate

situation. I did not for an instant doubt that this was the beginning of the end, that if I was not capsized and drowned out of hand by some growing sea, I was to perish (unless I took my own life) of hunger and thirst. Yet the rage and terror which were upon me when I looked over my shoulder at the receding wreck passed away, with the help of God to be sure, ere the figures of the miscreants who had served me thus had been blended by distance out of their shapes into the body and hues of the hull. I thought to myself it is an escape, at all events. I *may* perish here; yet is there hope; but had I stayed *yonder* I was doomed: the sight of the gold had made them thirsty for my life. In my sleep, ay, or even waking, they would have hacked me to pieces and flung me overboard to the sharks here.

In this consideration, I say, I seemed to find a source of comfort. If I died as I now was, it would be God's act, whereas had I remained in the wreck I must have been brutally butchered by the wretches whom the devil had despatched to me in the darkness of the morning that was gone. Nevertheless I was at a loss to comprehend their motive in thus using me. First of all by sending me away in their boat, they had robbed themselves of their only chance of escape should the wreck founder. Then again, I was a man, with a serviceable pair of hands belonging to me, and how

necessary willing help was to persons circumstanced as they were, they could easily have gathered from the labours of the day. Besides, they would be able to judge of my condition by my attire, and how could they be sure that I should demand the treasure or put in my claim for a share of it? But I need not weary you with my speculations.

The sun sank when there was a space of about a league betwixt my boat and the wreck, and the darkness came in a stride out of the east. The wind was weak and hot, and there was a crackling noise of ripples round about the boat as she lay with scarce any way upon her, lightly but briskly bobbing upon the tropic ocean dimples. When the darkness came I let fall my sail, intending later on, when the wreck should have got well away towards the horizon, to head north; for methought the further I drew towards the equator out of these seas the better would be my chance of being rescued. The stars were very plentiful, rich, and brilliant that night. I gave God thanks for their company, and for the stillness and peace upon the ocean, and I prayed to Him to watch over and to succour me. When the moon rose I stood up and looked around, but saw nothing of the wreck; on which I hoisted my sail afresh and headed the boat north, as I conjectured by the position of the moon. There was a deal of fire in the sea, and I would again and

again direct my eyes at the fitful flashing over the side with a dread in me of witnessing the outline of a shark.

The moon had risen about two hours, when I spied the gleam of water in the bottom of the boat. I was greatly startled, believing that she was leaking. Certainly there had been no water when I first entered her, nor down to this minute had I noticed the light or heard the noise of it in her. There was a little pewter mug in the stern sheets, a relic of the ship from which the Portuguese had come. I fell to bailing with it, and presently emptied the boat. No more water entered, for which at first I was deeply thankful; but after a little I got musing upon how it could have penetrated, seeing that no more came; and then a dreadful suspicion entering my mind, I looked for the jar which the Portuguese had handed into the boat, and saw it lying on its bilge in the bows. I picked it up and shook it; it was empty! It had been corked by a piece of canvas which still remained in the bung, but on the jar capsizing through the jerking of the boat, the water had easily drained out, and it was this precious fluid which I had been feverishly baling and casting overboard!

Maddened as I was by this discovery, I had yet sense enough remaining to sop my handkerchief in the little puddle that still damped the bottom

of the boat, and to wring the moisture into the pewter measure. But at the outside half a pint was the utmost I recovered, which done I sat me down, my face buried in my hands, with my eyes scorched as though they were seared by the burning tears that rose to them from my full and breaking heart.

The night passed. Hour after hour I lay in a sort of stupefaction in the stern sheets, taking no notice of the weather, my eyes fixed upon the stars, a little space of which directly over my head I would crazily essay to number. Once I pressed the handkerchief to my parched lips, but found the damp of it brackish, and threw it from me. But I would not touch the precious drop of water I had preserved. Too bitterly well did I guess how the morrow's sun would serve me, and the very soul within me seemed to recoil from the temptation to moisten my dry and burning tongue.

The memory of the early hours of that morning, of daybreak, of the time that followed, is but that of a delirium. I took no heed of my navigation. The sheet of the sail was fast, and the boat travelled softly before the gentle breeze that sat in little curls upon the water. I recollect thinking in a stupid, half-numbed way, that the boat was pursuing the path of the wreck whose one sail would suffer her to travel only straight before the wind. But the pain of thirst, the anguish of my

situation, the maddening heat of the sun, the cruel, eternal barrenness of the ocean; these things combined lay like death upon me. I was sensible only that I lived and suffered. There was biscuit in the canvas bag which had been put in the boat. I thought by munching a fragment to ease the anguish in my throat, but found I could not swallow. Ah, heavenly God! the deliriousness of the gaze which I fastened upon the clear, cool, blue water over the side, the horrible temptation to drink of it, to plunge, and soak, and drown in it the torment of the seething and creaming noises of its ripples against the burning sides of the boat, which sickened the atmosphere with their poisonous smell of hot paint!

The night came—a second night. Some relief from the thirst which tortured me I had obtained by soaking my underclothes, and wearing the garments streaming. It was a night of wonderful oceanic beauty and tenderness: the moon, a glorious sphere of brilliancy, the wind sweet and cool with dew, and the sea sleeping to the quiet cradling of its swell. I had not closed my eyes for many a long weary hour, and nature could hold out no longer. It was a little before midnight I think that I fell asleep; the boat was then sailing quietly along, and steering herself, making a fair straight course of her progress—though to what quarter of the heavens she was carrying me

I knew not, nor for a long while had thought of guessing. When I awoke the darkness was still upon the ocean, and the moon behind a body of high light cloud which she whitened and which concealed her, though her radiance yet lay in the atmosphere as a twilight. Right ahead of me, but at what distance I could not imagine, there floated a dark object upon the water. My glance had gone to her sleepily, but the instant it fell upon her I sprang to my feet, and bounded like a dart into the bow of the boat, and stood with my hands on the square of the canoe-shaped stem straining my sight into the gloom.

She was a ship—no doubt of that; yet she puzzled me greatly. The light was so thin and deceptive that I could distinguish little more than the block of blackness she made upon the dark sea. Apparently she was lying with all sails furled, or else hauled up close to the yards. One moment I would think that she was without masts; then I imagined I could perceive a visionary fabric of spar and rope. But she was a ship! Help she would yield me—the succour of her deck, and, oh my God! one drink, but *one* drink of water!

I flung the oars over, and weak as I was fell to rowing with might and main. The boat buzzed through the ripples to the impulse of my thirst-maddened arms. The shadow ahead slowly

loomed larger and closer, till all in a breath I saw by a sudden gleam of moonlight which sparkled through a rent in the cloud, that she was *La Mulette!*

I dropped the oars, let fall the sail, and stood with my eyes fixed upon her, considering a little. Would the men murder me if I boarded her? Or would they not fill my empty jar for me on my beseeching them, on my pointing to my frothing lip as the yellow man had done, on my asking for water only, promising to depart at once? Why, it was better to be butchered by their cutlasses than to perish thus. I felt mad at the thought of a long sweet draught of wine and water out of a cold pannikin, and rendered utterly defiant, absolutely reckless by my sufferings, and by the dream and allurement of a drink of water, I fell to the oars again, and rowed the boat alongside the wreck.

I now noticed for the first time that the mast and sail which the fellows had erected were gone. Indeed the mast lay over the side, and the sail floated black under it in the water. I listened; all was hushed as death in the motionless hulk. I secured the painter of the boat to the chain plate, sprang on to the deck and stood looking a minute. Close to the wheel lay the figure of a man. He was sound asleep as I might suppose, his head pillowed on his arm, and the other arm over his

face in a posture of sheltering it. He was the only one of the three visible. Wildly reckless always and goaded with the agony of thirst I went straight to the hatch and dropped into the cabin. The blackness was that of a coal-mine, but I knew the way, and after a little groping found the pantry door and entered. With an eager hand I sought for a candle, found one and lighted it, and in a few minutes my thirst was assuaged and I was standing with clasped uplifted hands thanking God for the exquisite comfort of the draught. Yet I drank cautiously. My need made me believe that I could have drained a cask to its dregs, but I forced my dreadful craving to be satisfied with scarce more than a quarter of a pint. The drink relaxed the muscles of my throat and I was able to eat. Afterwards I drank a little again, and then I felt a new man.

I stayed about twenty minutes in the pantry, in which time I heard no kind of noise saving a dim creak now and again from the hold of the wreck. Extinguishing the candle I entered the cabin and stood debating with myself on the course I should follow. Water I must have: should I fill a jar and carry it stealthily to the boat and be off and take my chance of managing the business unheard? Yes, I would do that, and if I aroused the sleepers, why, seeing that I was willing to go they might not refuse me a supply of drink . . .

I was musing thus when there was the sound of a yawn on deck. At that moment I remembered the array of cutlasses that embellished the cabin ceiling. It was the noise the fellow made, the perception that one of the three at all events was awake with his mates somewhere at hand to swiftly alarm, which put the thought of those cutlasses into my head, or it is fifty to one if in the blackness of that interior I should have recollected them. I sprang upon the table and in a moment was gripping a blade. The very feel of it, the mere sense of being armed sent the blood rushing through my veins as though to some tonic of miraculous potency. "Now," thought I, setting my teeth, "let the ruffians fall upon me if they will. If my life is to be taken it shall not be for the want of an English arm to defend it."

I jumped on to the deck, went stealthily to the foot of the steps and listened. The man yawned again, and I heard the tread of his foot as he moved, whence I suspected him to be the yellow boatswain, the others being unshod, though to be sure there were shoes enough in the 'tween decks for them had they a mind to help themselves. As I sent a look up through the lifted corner of tarpaulin over the hatch I spied the delicate, illusive grey of daybreak in the air, and so speedy was the coming of the dawn that it lay broad with the sun close under the rim of the horizon ere I

could form a resolution whilst listening to make sure that he who was on deck continued alone. Then hearing him yawn again and no sound of the others reaching my ears, I mounted the steps and gained the deck.

It was the Portuguese boatswain, as I had

imagined. He was in the act of seating himself much in the same place where I had seen him sleeping when I boarded the vessel; but he instantly saw me as I arose, and remained motionless and rigid as though blasted by a flash of

lightning. His jaw dropped, his hideous little eyes protruded bright with horror and fright from their sockets, and his yellow face changed into a sort of greenish tint like mottled soap or the countenance of a man in a fit. No doubt he supposed me a spectre, rising as I did in that way out of the cabin when the rogue would imagine me a hundred miles off, or floating a corpse in the water, and I dare say but for the paralysis of terror that had fixed his jaw some pious sentences would have dropped from him. For my part I hung in the wind undecided, at a loss to act. I sent a look over my shoulder to observe if the others were about, and the movement of my head seemed like the release of him from the constraint of my eye. He leapt into an erect posture and rushed to the side, saw the boat, uttered a cry for all the world resembling the rough, saw-like yell of the albatross stooping to some bait in the foaming eddies of a wake, in a bound came back to the binnacle, the body of which stood, though the compass, hood and glass were gone, and thrusting his hand into it pulled out a pistol which he levelled at me. The weapon flashed as I ran at him. Ere he had time to draw the cutlass which dangled at his hip, I had buried the blade, the large heavy hilt of which I grasped with both hands, deep in his neck, crushing clean through his right jaw; and even whilst he was in the act of

falling I had lifted and brought the cutlass down upon him again, this time driving the edge of it so deep into his skull that the weight of him as he dropped dead dragged the weapon out of my hand, and it was a wrestle of some moments to free the blade.

I swept round fully prepared for the confrontment of the others, who, I took it, if they were sleeping below, would rush up on deck on hearing the report of the pistol. My head was full of blood; I felt on fire from my throat to my feet. God knows why or how it was, for I should have imagined of myself that the taking of a human life would palsy my muscles with the horror of the thing to the weakness of a woman's arm; and yet in the instant of my rounding, prepared for, panting for a sight of the other two, I seemed conscious of the strength of a dozen men in me.

All was still. The sun had risen in splendour; the ocean was a running surface of glory under him, and the blue of the south had the dark tenderness of violet with the gushing into it of the hot and sparkling breeze which had sprung up in the north with the coming of the morn. Where were the others? My eyes reeled as they went from the corpse of the Portuguese to the pistol he had let drop. I picked it up; it was a rude weapon belonging to the armoury of *La Mulette*. I conjectured that the miscreant would not have

thus armed himself without providing a stock of ammunition at hand, and on putting my arm into the binnacle stand I found, sure enough, a powder-horn and a parcel of pistol-bullets. I carefully loaded the weapon, narrowly seeing to the priming, all the while constantly glancing along the deck and listening. Then with the pistol in one hand and the cutlass in the other, I stepped below, furious and eager for a sight of the dead man's mates.

The lifted tarpaulin let the morning sunshine fall fair into the cabin, and now I saw that which had before been invisible to me; I mean a great blood-stain upon the deck, with a spattering of blood-drops and spots of more hideous suggestion yet, round about. A thin trail of blood went from the large stain upon the floor along through the passage betwixt the berths, and so to the main hatch. Ha! thought I, *this* signifies murder! I found nothing in the cabins. The door of the berth in which the chest of gold stood, was locked, but on putting my whole weight against it with knee and shoulder it flew open. The contents of the place were as I had before taken notice of; and there were no signs here of either dead or living men. I regained the deck, and walking forward observed a thin line of blood going from the coamings of the main hatch to the side. It was the continuation and termination of the

trail below, and most unmistakably denoted the passage of a bleeding body borne through the hatch and cast overboard. I walked further forward yet, and on the forecastle witnessed another wide stain of blood. It looked fresher than the other—nay, it was not yet dry, and the heat went out of my body, and ice cold shudders swept through my limbs as I turned my back upon it, sick, dizzy, and trembling.

Those horrible marks gave me the whole story as fully as though the dead brute aft had recited it to me at large ere I struck him down. He had murdered his mates one after the other to be alone with the gold. It had been murder cold and deliberate, I was sure There were no signs of a struggle; there were no hints of any previous conflict in the person of the yellow Portuguese. It was as though he had crept behind the men one after another, and struck them down with a chopper. Indeed I was as sure of this as though I had witnessed the deed; and there was the chest of gold in the cabin to explain the reason of it. How he hoped to manage if he fell in with a ship (and I know not what other expectation of coming off with his life he could have formed) it is useless to conjecture. Some plausible tale no doubt he would have taken care to prepare, claiming the gold as his by law of treasure-trove.

I let fall the weapons, and lay over a little strip

of bulwark, panting for breath. My eyes were upon the water over the side, but a minute after on directing them at the sea-line, I spied the sails of a ship, a square of pearl glimmering in the blue distance, and slightly leaning from the hot and brilliant breeze gushing fair down upon her starboard beam. Scarce had my mind time to recognize the object as a ship, when it vanished; a reddish gloom boiled up mistlike all about me; the ocean to a mile away from the side of the wreck turned of the deep crimson of blood, spinning round like a teetotum; then followed blackness, and I remember no more. . . .

When consciousness returned I found myself lying in a bunk in a ship's cabin. The place was familiar to me, and I recollect in a weak way trying to find out why it should be so. "Why, confound it all," I muttered, "this is my cabin aboard the *Ruby*. God! what a dream it has been!"

"Very glad your senses have returned to you, Mr. Catesby. It's been a doocid long faint, sir," exclaimed a familiar voice, and no less a person than the second mate of the *Ruby* came to my bedside.

A moment after the door opened, and the doctor of the ship entered. I was about to speak; he peremptorily motioned silence, felt my pulse and brow, nodding approvingly; then addressing

the mate, thanked him for keeping watch and told him he could go. As my dawning intellects brightened, my eagerness to make sure of the reality of the adventure I had come through grew into a little fever. When I looked round the cabin and saw my clothes hanging upon the bulkhead, my books, the twenty odds and ends of the homely furniture of my berth, I could not but believe that I had fallen ill, been seized perhaps with a fever, and that the incidents of the wreck, the open boat, the murderous Portuguese, were a mere vision of my distempered brain. But for some hours the doctor had his way, would not suffer me to talk, with his own hand brought me broth and wine, and now, finding me strong enough, as I supposed, to support a conversation, went out and in a few minutes returned with Captain Bow.

It was *then* my suspicion that all that had happened to me was most horribly and fearfully real was confirmed. The boat that had left me aboard the wreck had been sighted sweeping down in the mist; twenty ropes' ends had been hove at her from the *Ruby*, and in a few minutes her people were safe on the Indiaman's deck. Sail was shortened to close-reefed topsails, but a black blowing night drew around, as you know, and when the dawn broke the wreck was nowhere visible. Light, baffling weather followed. Mean-

while Bow swore that he would not quit these waters till he had exhausted the inside of a week in search for me. At sunrise that morning the wreck was signalled from the fore-top-gallant yard of the *Ruby*. The ship was immediately headed for it, and in a couple of hours the hulk was close aboard. The chief officer was sent in charge of a boat, and I was found lying, dead as they thought, a fathom's distance from a large stain of blood, whilst aft was the body of a half-caste with his head cut open. They left *him* as he lay, but me they handed into the boat to carry on board, with the design of giving me a Christian burial, till the doctor, looking at me, asked if they wanted to add to the horrors of the wreck by drowning a living man, and ordered me to be conveyed at once to my bed.

This was the captain's story, and I then related mine. Both he and the doctor exchanged looks as I talked. It was tolerably evident to my mind that they only believed in about a quarter of what I told them.

"But, Captain," I cried, "on my solemn honour as a gentleman, as I am alive here to say it, there was gold to the value of many thousands of pounds in the chest."

"Yes, yes," he answered with a glance of compassion at me. "I don't doubt it, Mr. Catesby. So much the better for the mermen when it goes

down to them ; it will render the mermaids more placable, I don't doubt."

"But, gracious mercy!" I cried, "it is only the sending of a boat, you know. Why, sir, there's enough in that chest to yield a little fortune to every mother's son of us aboard."

"Yes, yes," said Captain Bow, with a faint smile of concern at the doctor, who kept his eyes with a knowing look in them fastened upon the deck. "But we took you off the wreck, my dear sir, a little before nine o'clock, and it is now after four, and as our speed has been a comfortable eight knots ever since, you may reckon the hulk at sixty miles' distance astern. No, Mr. Catesby, we're bound to Bombay this time in earnest, sir. No more hunting after wrecks this voyage."

But I got every man-jack of the passengers, with the whole ship's company to boot, to credit my story up to the hilt before we had measured half the length of the Bay of Bengal, and such was the conviction I had inspired forwards at all events that the third mate one night told me it was reported that a number of the forecastle hands had made up their minds to charter, if possible, if not, then to run away with, a country wallah on the *Ruby's* arrival at Bombay, and sail the Indian Ocean till they fell in with the wreck—if she was still afloat.

. . . . .

But now to resume the story of Master Rockafellar's voyage: we caught the south-east trades much closer to the equator than they are used to blow, and bowled merrily down the South Atlantic, rounding the Cape of Good Hope at a distance of fifty leagues from it, and driving ahead, with a strong westerly gale over our stern, straight as an arrow for Cape Leeuwin. Though the *Lady Violet* showed like a frigate upon the water, with a beam that made her look somewhat tub-like, and a round massive bow that would crush a sea as the head of a whale might, she sailed nobly, easily reeling off a full twelve knots when there was wind enough to drive her, looking up when on a bowline with erect spars and a wake without an inch of lee-way in it; and I have known her, even in regions of calms and cats-paws and baffling airs, to travel in some mysterious manner a hundred miles in twenty-four hours.

She was a favourite ship among passengers, and almost as punctual in her dates as though she were a steamer; and this voyage, true to her old records, she sailed through the Sydney Heads one sparkling morning at about eight o'clock, making the time of her passage from the Thames exactly eighty-one days.

I will pass swiftly over our stay at Sydney. I should need a deal of room to describe the glories of this rich Australian scene, of islands and blue

water and shores, with white houses peeping out from amidst the fringe of the bush. We hauled in alongside the Circular Quay, and then followed much grimy work in the shape of discharging cargo, furbishing up the ship, attending to the rigging, and the like. Then the vessel was conveyed to the other side of the harbour to receive her freight of wool. I was ashore a good many times, yet cannot say that I saw much of Sydney. Many a long hour would I spend in the beautiful Botanical Gardens, gazing at the astonishing vegetation, and watching with admiration the songless birds of superb plumage which throng those acres of grace, beauty, and colour. Mr. Cock took me to the theatre. I was out rowing and sailing too very often; but the captain would not let me have much liberty. He said I was too young to be cruising about ashore alone, and indeed my half-crown a week did not help me very largely to partake of the diversions of Sydney. My chief pleasure lay in sitting in the main-chains, when there was nothing to do, and fishing. Many fish, wonderful in colour, did I haul up, and some of them were a very delicate food.

The *Lady Violet* was pretty deep with wool when we were towed out to sea. The passengers we had brought out were replaced by a new set—all of them colonials, intending a visit to the old home for purposes of pleasure or business. Three of our

sailors had run away, and new men were taken in their place ; otherwise the ship's company remained as it had been.

I remember going on the forecastle in the second dog-watch of the first day that we were out, and leaning over the head-rail and looking into the evening-shadowed distance, and saying to myself, "We are homeward bound!" Ah, the delight of those words to the sailor, be he old or young! It is the most inspiriting of all the sentiments in the songs Jack sings. It is a thought that seems to compensate for all past hardships, and to hearten a man to endure all that may be harsh and painful in the time that yet lies between him and his arrival home. My young heart beat high, I remember, and I found a wonderful delight, as I overlay the forecastle rail, in looking straight down under me, where the coppered fore-foot of the ship was sheering through the satin-like seas rolling to her bow, and in thinking that every fathom of white water, with its tinkling foam-bells and bubbles of yellow spume which ran past, shortened the distance between me and my dear old home by six feet!

We were in the South Pacific now, making for the terrible Cape Horn, about whose enormous icebergs and leviathan seas and black snow-storms there was a deal said in our midshipmen's berth ; but it was still delicious weather ; the indescribable

sweetness and softness of the Pacific was in the temperature; the sun-touched billows chased us in lines of dark blue and flaming gold; sea-birds with breasts of snow, poised on long tremulous wings of ermine, hovered in our wake; and the albicore and the bonito merrily kept us company, as the *Lady Violet* went ambling through the caressing waters.

This was the pleasantest part of the voyage, so far as I was concerned. I made friends with one of the boatswain's mates, and was much in the forecastle with him during my watches below. I can see myself now, sitting on his sea-chest, listening to the yarns he spun me about the voyages he had made and the countries he had visited, or learning from him how to lay up sennit, to wield a marline-spike, to use the palm and needle, and so on. A lamp fed by slush spluttered under a blackened beam just over us; a number of hammocks hung from the ceiling or upper deck, with here and there a weather-darkened face, well whiskered, overlying the edge of the canvas with a pipe in its mouth. A double tier of bunks went curving into the eyes of the ship where the hawse-pipes were, and where the gloom lay heavy. In one of these beds a man would lie with a book in his hand, laboriously reading, his lips moving like a child's as his eyes spelt down the page. Squatting on a chest would be a grim unshaven salt, sourly

"LISTENING TO THE YARNS HE SPUN."

stitching at a pair of breeches. Elsewhere you would see a fellow greasing his sea-boots, another munching at a sea-biscuit with his eyes fixed like an owl's, a third cutting up a pipeful of tobacco from a black flat cake that made me think of toffee. Yet, despite the life and movement within, the forecastle was always very quiet. My boatswain's mate would talk to me in hoarse whispers, and the other sailors rarely conversed above their breath. Sleep is naturally prized at sea. The opportunities for taking it are short, and must be made the most of. Hence, seamen are very careful that their mates, when turned in, should repose undisturbed that when their own turn comes round for a nap they may sleep in quiet.

The dog-watches are the holiday hours at sea, and on a fine evening, whilst we were in the Pacific, I would repair to the forecastle and there sit, listening to and watching the men until the sun went down and the black shadow of night came along. They had a fiddle amongst them, and one of them played the concertina, and these instruments made music enough to set them a-dancing. I have laughed till the tears stood in my eyes to watch the brawny capering Jacks sliding about in a waltz, tenderly embracing one another as partners, capsizing over the flukes of the stowed anchors, and making a very pageant of the forecastle deck—with its rough details of capstan, catheads, scuttle

and the like—by their swimming, floating, jovial figures, coloured of every hue with the clothes they wore. My friend the boatswain's mate danced the hornpipe to perfection. He valued himself on this art, and was not always very forward in obliging us. When he suffered himself to be coaxed, the treat he gave us was a real one. He would dress himself so as to resemble a man-of-war's man, and make his appearance with a straw hat on the back of his head—on "nine-hairs," as sailors say—flowing trousers, pumps, an open shirt that disclosed his mossy breast, and take his stand on a part of the forecastle where the passengers aft could see him. The fiddler would then clamber on to the booms over the long-boat, and begin to saw away, and off would start the boatswain's mate in a delightful shuffle—feet twinkling, legs vibrating, arms arched—a manly figure indeed! whilst the sailors noisily clapped their hands in huge relish of the show.

We were drawing into colder weather, though Cape Horn was still a long way off, when there happened two incidents in the same morning, one of which—as you will suppose when I have related it—made a very deep impression on me.

The ship was under all plain sail, by which is signified all the canvas a vessel carries saving her studding-sails. The breeze was moderate and off the bow, and there was very little sea; but through

the bosom of the deep there ran, as regular as the beat of the pulse, a long swell, slipping its volumes into our quarter with weight enough in each broad-backed fold to keep the *Lady Violet* curtseying until the forecastle of her looked as flat as a spoon on the slope of water ahead. I was at work with Kennet in one of the quarter-boats, clearing her out. The boat hung from a pair of irons, termed "davits," over the side, and was steadied by flat mat-like lashings, called "gripes." From over the gunwale of the boat we could obtain a clear view of the sea ahead, whereas, from the poop the horizon over the bows was concealed by the foresail and mainsail.

Presently, pausing in my work to glance ahead, I caught sight of a body of foam about a couple of points on the bow, as we should say, though how far off it was I could not imagine. Figure the moon reflecting herself in water just as she shows in the heavens—that is to say, as a bright silver disk—and you will obtain a good idea of the appearance on which my eyes had fastened. It rose and fell upon the swell, by which one knew that it must be afloat, whatever it was.

"See that, Kennet?" said I.

He peered and cried, "Ha! doth it move?"

We stared at it.

"No," said he, "it ith'nt moving. I thought it wath a whirlwind firtht. I thay tho'—what the doothe—tain't a *windmill*, ith it?"

I now saw, as he had seen, what resembled the vanes of a windmill revolving in the foam—a wet black arm that rose and fell out of the white seething like to the blades of a propeller rotating under the counter of a tall light steamer, amidst the boiling of the water churned up by the machine.

"See that thrasher!" suddenly shouted the chief mate. "By George, gentlemen and ladies, a fight between a thrasher and a whale, as I live! A rare sight, truly!"

And all the passengers who were on deck came rushing with him over to the side to look. As we approached, the spectacle grew in magnitude, and proved one of the wildest—I may say one of the most terrific—pictures which the imagination could body forth, even of the sea—that arena of wonders and of terrors. There was so much fury of foaming water, that it was hard to distinguish the gigantic combatants. Yet now and again I would catch a sight of a large space of the gleaming dark body of a leviathan whale, upon which the great arms of the thrasher were beating in blows, the echoes of which had something of a metallic twang in them that made you think of a giant blacksmith striking upon an enormous anvil. The boiling commotion covered a large space of water, and might easily have passed for the first fierce foamings of a waterspout.

I watched, breathless with astonishment and awe,

my eyes half out of my head. Here was something to talk about to my father and mother! But would they believe it? It was a sight I could scarcely credit, specially when Kennet told me that what I saw of the whale was only a little bit of him.

"Will the thrasher kill him?" said I.

"I expect tho," he answered; "anyhow, of the two, I'd thooner not be the whale."

When the monster duellists had settled down upon our quarter, the long black arms suddenly vanished. The seething turmoil expired into smooth water, and the swell rolled flawless as before.

"The whale'th killed," said Kennet; "keep a bright look-out, Rockafellar, and you'll thee his body rithe."

But though I stared long and earnestly, it was to no purpose; the body did *not* rise: haply because the whale wasn't dead.

"Oh, but," said Kennet, "a big chap like that ithn't going to rithe up with a pop ath though he wath a little fith. When a whale gothe to work, no matter what hith buthineth ith, he'th bound to take hith time. Did you ever thee a fat man hurry himthelf. Courth not. Tho ith it with whaleth."

For a long time I continued to furtively glance at the sea, and then gave up looking, secretly

pleasing myself with the idea that the whale was still alive, and not very much hurt ; for it seemed to me very hard that any creature should meet with so dreadful an end as being flogged to death.

CHAPTER IX.

HE SEES AN ICEBERG.

WHEN I had finished my work in the boat, I walked forward to toast my hands for a little at the galley-fire. The cook and I were good friends. Our esteem for each other had grown up through my giving him a portion of my allowance of rum, which acts of attention he repaid by presenting me, from time to time, with a hot roll or jam tart. For, though the owner of the *Lady Violet* had told my father that his ships were sober vessels, yet with us it was the practice for the steward to serve out every day at noon, on the drum of the capstan on the quarter-deck, a gill, or tot, of rum to the whole ship's company. We midshipmen, as being on the articles, were included, and, regularly with the rest, I presented myself for my "tot"; but the stuff was much too fiery for me; the flavour, moreover, I thought extremely disagreeable; so, instead of swallowing the dose, I preserved it in a bottle and gave it to the boatswain's mate, and the cook,

and to the man who washed my linen, and to one or two others.

Well, having yarned a bit with the cook about the fight between the whale and the thrasher, whilst I warmed my fingers at his genial stove, I quitted the galley to go aft again. As I left the structure, the chief mate, standing at the break of the poop, sang out for some hands to clew up the main-royal and furl it. The mizzen-royal, I saw, was in process of being stowed by Poole, and there was a fellow dancing up the lower fore-shrouds on his way to furl the fore-royal. Some hands came tumbling past me; they let go the halliards and tailed on to the clew-lines, and a couple of sailors jumped on to the bulwarks to get into the rigging. One continued on his way aloft; the other halted with his feet still upon the bulwark-rail, and his left hand upon his heart.

He was a short man, with a yellowish, coarse face, dingy and stained, the skin like an old blanket. He had a tuft of ginger-coloured beard under his chin, a rounded back that seemed hunched, and stunted bow legs. I looked at him as I came abreast on my way to the poop, struck by his lingering when he should have been running aloft—struck, also, by a quite indescribable expression in his face. His eyes were upturned like those of a sleeper when you part the lids. I was exactly opposite him when he fell. He tumbled inboards like a wooden

figure ; and his head struck my shoulder with such force that I was spun round and felled, half-senseless, to the deck.

I recovered in a few moments, and sat upright ; nobody took any notice of me. A crowd had gathered round the prostrate man, and presently two or three of the sailors lifted him up and carried him forwards. *He was stone dead!* The doctor examined the body, and said it was disease of the heart that had killed him.

I cannot express the effect this shock produced upon me. The mere seeing the poor fellow fall a corpse would have been painful and terrible to my young nerves ; but to be struck by him—to carry about with me a shoulder aching from the blow of his head !—it was an incident that filled my boyish sleep with nightmares that lasted me for a long fortnight. Again and again I would start from my slumbers—from some horrible vision of the dead man clasping me—drawing me from my bed—struggling to carry me on deck to jump overboard with me ! Had I found courage to speak out, my mind might have been soothed ; but I did not dare whisper my thoughts for fear of being laughed at, and though the impression faded before long, yet, whilst it lasted I was the most nervous miserable creature, I do believe, that was ever afloat.

The burial of this poor fellow gave me an opportunity of witnessing what I cannot but think

the most impressive ceremony that is anywhere to be viewed. How solemn a thing is a funeral on shore we all know; but at sea those points and features which render the interment of the dead on land affecting and awful are immeasurably heightened by the vastness of the ocean, the mystery of its depths, the contrast between it and the littleness of the form committed to its great dark heart, and, above all, by the utter extinction of the body. Ashore there is a grave: you can point to the mound or to the stone; but at sea nothing but a bubble follows the plunge of the corpse: it is swallowed up in the immensity of the deep as the mounting lark dies out in the blue into which it soars.

The dead sailor was stitched up in his hammock and a weight attached to his feet. The shrouded figure was placed upon a hatch grating, and the large ensign thrown over it, after which it was brought by four seamen to the gangway. The captain stood bare-headed close by, prayer-book in hand; the whole ship's company gathered round, most of them having made some little difference in their attire for the occasion; the passengers collected at the break of the poop, the gentlemen with their caps in their hands, and the ladies looking down upon the quarter-deck with grave and earnest faces. A stillness fell upon the ship, and you heard nothing but the voice of the captain reading

the Service, mingled with the hissing noise of the foam washing past, and the humming of the wind in the concavities of the canvas. At a signal one end of the grating was lifted, and the hammock flashed overboard. A shudder ran through me as I saw it go. Then, when the last words of the Service had been recited, the captain put on his hat and entered the cabin, the boatswain's pipe rung out shrilly in dismissal of the men, and within a quarter of an hour the ship had regained her familiar appearance—the ladies walking on the poop, the captain briskly chatting with some passengers near the wheel, and the sailors of the watch at work on their several jobs about the deck and in the rigging.

It was customary in my time to hold an auction of the effects of a dead sailor shortly after his burial. There was an odd mixture of humour and pathos in the scene. The poor fellow's chest was brought on to the quarter-deck, and the mate at the capstan played the part of auctioneer. I stood under the break of the poop, looking on ; and, young as I was, I seemed to have mind enough to appreciate the queer appearance the Jacks presented as they stood shouldering one another in bunches, with something of shyness in their manner, and with askant, half-sheepish, yet grinning glances directed at the ladies who stood on the poop, viewing the scene.

There was not much of an auction, for the poor fellow had left very few clothes behind him. He had been one of those improvident sailors who will spend in a single night ashore the earnings for which they have laboured during a twelvemonth, and who are driven by poverty to ship again in a hurry, often rolling into the forecastle with nothing but a jumper and a pair of tarry breeches in their bags. The articles were held up for the crew to see; Mr. Johnson did not apparently relish the idea of handling them. The steward pulled a pair of trousers out of the chest, and expanded them between his raised hands.

"What bid for these?" said the mate; "you all behold them. Observe that patch; the neatness of the stitching heightens the value of those trousers by at least five shillings more than they are intrinsically worth, if only as an object of art just to look at. How much shall I say?"

One bid two shillings, another five, and the breeches were ultimately knocked down to the cook for ten—not a little to my astonishment, for it seemed to me that an offer of even threepence for them would have been excessive. The steward then flourished a worn shirt, for which a sailor with a hoarse voice offered three-and-sixpence. It was knocked down to him, and, had it been an extraordinary bargain, he could not have looked more pleased. Then a very rusty monkey-jacket was

exposed, together with a belt and sheath-knife, a pair of shoes which certainly did not match, a greasy Scotch cap, and one or two other articles of a like nature. They all fetched high prices. The sailors seemed to regard the biddings as a joke; yet it was impossible that there should be much humour in the thing to those to whom these specimens of squalid raiment were knocked down, since the money was deducted from their pay. Nor could I gather of what use the clothes were likely to prove to the fellows who purchased them, there being superstitious fancies in every forecastle concerning dead men's attire, so that very few sailors will ever be got to clothe themselves in a drowned ship-mate's dress.

But there is a deal of good nature in the recklessness of Jack's character, and the bids made at these auctions are owing, not to the desire of the men to possess the articles, but to the feeling that the money they spend will be of help to the dead man's relatives.

The captain, in making the Horn this voyage, was running his ship on the Great Circle track; at all events, he was steering a very much more southerly course than was customary with vessels whose masters deemed a wide spread of longtitude preferable to the risks of ice amongst the narrower meridians. It was not the harshest time of the year down off the South American headland; but

even with Cape Horn in sight, the weather would have been bitterly and abominably cold. Judge, then, how it was with us when I tell you that the navigation of the *Lady Violet* carried her to within a league or two of sixty degrees south latitude. I had often heard of Cape Horn seas and skies, and here they were now with a vengeance—an horizon shrouded by a wall of grey mist to within a musket-shot of the ship; the shadows of black clouds whirling overhead and darkening the air yet with heavy snowfalls, which blew along in horizontal masses, thick as the contents of a feather-bed, or with volleys of hail big as plums, which rang upon the decks as though tons of bullets were being emptied out of the tops; seas of mountainous height of a dark olive-green, whose white and roaring heads seemed to brush the flying soot of the heavens as they came storming at us; the rigging glazed with ice; the running gear so frozen that the ropes crackled in our hands as wood spits in a fire; the decks full of water, with such a rolling and plunging of them besides that it was sometimes at the risk of your life that you let go the rope you swung by to obey an order—this was my experience of the Horn!

And only a little bit of it, too. Spite of our oil-skins, we were so repeatedly wet through that it came to our having no dry clothes to put on. I have known what it is to come down from aloft

after reefing the mizen topsail, and to shed tears, child as I was, with the agony of the cold in my hands. The cook could do nothing with the galley-fire, and there was no warm food to be had. Again and again would we of the watch on deck go below, and appease our hunger by a meal of mouldy biscuit, which I would endeavour to sweeten with a coating of salt butter and moist sugar, and with a pannikin of cold water, tasting already like the end of a voyage. The passengers remained in the cuddy. The every-day ship's routine could not be carried on, and the sailors kept under cover, but always ready to rush out at the first summons. The decks therefore seemed deserted, and, but for the two hands at the wheel, and but for the mate of the watch, who crouched hugging himself under the lee of a square of canvas in the mizzen rigging, the ship might have been deemed abandoned — a craft speeding aimlessly before the gale with a company of souls dead below!

Never shall I forget the impression produced upon me one night by the sight of the sea. I came on deck at twelve o'clock, and found the ship hove-to under a close-reefed main topsail and fore-top-mast staysail. There was a curl of reddish moon in the northern sky, and over that shapeless blotch of light, as it looked to be, the loose scud was flying like rolls of brown smoke at hurricane

speed. The roaring of the surges was almost deafening, and there is nothing in language to convey the astounding noise of the wind in the ice-glaced rigging—the shrieking, the shrilling, the whistling of it, as it split in fiendish howlings upon the ropes, and swept away under the foot of the bursting band of topsail, with a note of thunder like the noise of a train of empty waggons speeding along the metals in tow of a locomotive.

I crept up the lee poop-ladder, but on gaining the deck was pinned to the rail for some minutes by the force of the wind. Then, finding I could do nothing with my legs, I fell upon my knees and crawled like a rat to windward; and, still crawling, I passed along under the shelter of the line of hen-coops until I arrived at the mizzen rigging, where the mate stood protected by the piece of sailcoth fastened to the shrouds. He handed me the end of a rope, which I passed round my waist and belayed to a pin, and then I could stand up without fear of falling, otherwise the prodigious slope of the deck rendered the feet entirely helpless.

I could now look about me. The first thing I saw, broad on the weather-bow, was a huge mass of faintness—a great blurr as it seemed of dim light —that seemed to blend with the flying gloom as you gazed, though if you withdrew your eye from it for a moment and then looked afresh, it showed,

I may even say, it *shone* out clearly. I shouted to Mr. Johnson to tell me what it was.

"An iceberg," he roared; for I can tell you it needed all the wind our lungs could hold to render ourselves audible to each other amid the fierce clamour of that Cape Horn night.

It was the first ice that I had seen. Several bergs of magnitude had been passed during the week, but always when I was below, and, as the weather was continuously thick, they were out of sight promptly, long before eight bells called me to keep my watch.

I stared, fascinated by the huge visionary spectral mass that lay, of the colour of faint starlight, out upon the bow. It came and went, for our ship was rolling furiously. Never could I have dreamt that the waves of the ocean raged to such a height as they were now running to. One moment the ship was on a level keel in the trough, in a valley deep down, with moving walls of water on either hand of her; for a breathless moment there was a lull, the gale seemed to have been spent, you heard nothing but the howl of it on high, and the savage hissing of boiling foam.

But in a moment the vessel was sweeping up the huge liquid incline—up and yet up, with sickening rapidity, with spars sloping till the angle of the deck was like that of the roof of a house, with all her top hamper shrieking anew, as it soared into the full weight of the gale. Then would follow

another instant's pause, whilst she hung poised on the flickering peak of the sea that had hoisted her, when once more down she would slip, reeling to windward as she went, until the heart of the valley was again reached, with its terrifying interval of calm and its deafening uproar of storm above.

I forgot the iceberg presently in watching the tremendous billows ; and for a considerable time I swung in the bight of the rope that was round me, full of consternation. As I looked at the approaching seas it seemed impossible that the ship could ride to them ; but she was a noble vessel, buoyant as an ocean bird, and she took every surge with a magnificent ease, falling away, as it were, from the first Titanic blow of it upon her bow, then rising, like a thing on wings and full of life, never shipping a drain of water save right forwards, where now and again you would see the spray blowing in a smoke of crystals right over the forecastle head.

Her glorious behaviour after a while restored confidence to me, and then I looked at the iceberg again. I longed to ask Mr. Johnson questions about it, but talking, beyond now and again a brief shout, was out of the question. Such a night as this was the right sort of frame in which to view the picture of that dim, wild, gigantic berg. The distorted smudge of red moon, the sweeping shadows of vapour, the enormous seas, frothing, as it seemed, to the very sky, the darkness, the

savage, warring noises of the tempest, all concurred to impart an inexpressible quality of awe and mystery and terror to that silent mass of paleness which loomed up out of the obscurity of the horizon each time our ship rose to the height of the sea.

The gale abated before my watch was out, but we were still hove-to when I went below. At eight o'clock, when the midshipmen in the starboard watch came down to rout us out, they told us that the wind had shifted, that the captain had come up on deck at seven and ordered the yards to be squared and the reefed fore-topsail and foresail set, and that the ship was now running dead before it on a course well to the north of east, which looked as if the "old man" feared that he had made more southing than was good for him, and was now heading for a warmer part of the ocean whilst there was a wind to serve him.

One did not need to be told that the vessel had the sea right astern of her. She was going along on a level keel, though pitching heavily, and the comparative evenness of her decks after the late fearful slope of them came with something of novelty to my strained and tired little legs.

On passing through the booby-hatch, I found the ship almost hidden in a snowstorm. The fall had the density of a fog, and I do not exaggerate when I say that nothing was to be seen

of the spars above the main-top, whilst the forecastle was an indistinguishable outline in the white smother blowing like steam along the decks. One of us midshipmen had to be on the poop within eyeshot of the mate. We took turn and turn about at this, Poole going first, and the others of us hanging together in the cuddy embrasure under the break of the deck, where there was some shelter to be obtained from the marrow-freezing, man-killing wind.

When my turn came round, the weather, that had been tolerably clear for half-an-hour, grew as thick as "mud in a wine-glass" again with snow. From the poop-rail the two men who were keeping a look-out on the forecastle head were hardly to be seen. It was blowing half a gale of wind, but, being dead aft, much of its weight was taken out of it.

Under reefed topsails and yawning foresail dark with saturation and iron-hard with frost, the ship drove before the blast, chased by huge seas which scared me to watch, as the summits rose in grey, freckled, and foaming hills high above the heads of the steersmen, who were clinging to the wheel with nervous, sinewy grip. The mate stood at the head of the weather-poop ladder; the captain, clothed in water-proof garments from head to foot, paced a bit of deck from the grating abaft the wheel to the mizzen-shrouds. Through the weeping

skylight you caught a dim glimpse of the outlines of passengers cuddling themselves in the cabin. Heavens, how did I envy them! What would I have given for the liberty to exchange this freezing, snow-swept deck for the warmth of the glowing cuddy-stove and the luxury of the wine-scented atmosphere, the comfortable sofas, the piano, and the little library of books which the steward had charge of!

"Well, Master Rockafellar," said the chief mate, "pray, sir, what do you think of Cape Horn?"

"I don't like it, sir," said I.

"Isn't it cold enough?" he asked.

"I prefer the equator, sir," I exclaimed.

I could see by a laugh in his eye that he was about to deliver something mirthful; but all on a sudden he fell as grave as a mute, and began to sniff, as though scenting something in the air whilst he cast a look at the captain, who continued to patrol the after part of the deck with a careless step. He sniffed again.

"I smell ice!" he exclaimed.

I thought he might wish me to sniff too, which I did, somewhat ostentatiously, perhaps, that he might notice me; but as to smelling ice—why, 'twas all snow to me, with a coldness in it that went beyond ice, to my mind. The flakes were still rolling over us, dense as smoke, from the lead-coloured sky, and the ship's bowsprit was nearly out of sight.

Once more the mate sniffed up the air with wide nostrils, went to the rail and thrust his head over, with a long, probing look ahead, and then came back to where I was standing. He was about to speak, when, out from the whirling, wool-white thickness forward, came the loud and fearful cry:

"*Ice right ahead, sir!*"

"Ice right ahead, sir!" re-echoed the mate in a shriek, whipping round his face towards the captain.

"I see it, sir! I see it!" cried the skipper. "Hard a starboard! hard a starboard! over with it for your lives, lads!"

The spokes revolved like the driving-wheel of a locomotive in the hands of the two seamen, and the ship paid off with a slow, stately sweep of her head, as she swung upon the underrun of a huge Pacific sea, brimming to her counter, and roaring in thunder along the line of her waterways—and just in time!

For, out upon the starboard bow there leapt out of the snowstorm, in proportions as huge as those of the cathedral of St. Paul's, a monster iceberg. It all happened in a minute, and what a minute was that! It was a prodigious crystalline mass, some of the sharp curves of it of a keen blue, the summits deep in snow, and the sides frightfully scored and gashed into ravines and gorges and caverns, whilst all about the sky-line of it, showing faintly in the whirling flakes, were forms of pin-

nacles and spires, of towers and minarets, columns like those of ruins, and wild and startling shapes like couchant beasts of colossal size, giant helmets, forts, turreted heads of castles, and I know not what besides.

In the fair and streaming sunshine, that would have filled it with flaming jewels of light, and kindled all kinds of rich and shining colours, it would have glowed out upon the sea as a most glorious, most magnificent object; but now, with the shadow upon it of the storm-laden sky, and rendered wild beyond imagination by the gyrations of the clouds of snow all about it, it offered a most dreadful and terrifying picture as it swept past, with the noise of the great seas bursting at its base, smiting the ear like shocks of earthquake.

We had escaped it by a miracle. Our ship's head had been pointed for it as neatly as the muzzle of a musket at the object to be shot at. In another three minutes our bows would have been into it, and the ship have ground herself away from the bows aft, as you shut up the tubes of a telescope!

Our captain seemed to take fright at this experience, and whilst the loom of the mighty mass was still visible on the lee quarter, orders were given for all hands to turn out and heave the ship to. Nor was way got upon her again till the weather cleared, and even then for several days

our progress was exceedingly stealthy, the order of the time being that whenever it came on thick the ship was to be hove-to. It was weary, desperate work, and every hand on board the ship soon grew to yearn, with almost shipwrecked longings, for the blue skies and the trade-winds of the South Atlantic.

CHAPTER X.

HE SIGHTS A WRECK.

BUT at last came a day when the meridian of Staten Island was passed under our counter; and when eight bells had been made, the ship's course was altered, and we were once more heading for the sun with a strong wind on the beam, the ocean working in long sapphire lines of creaming billows, the ship leaning down under a main-top-gallant sail, with a single reef in the topsail under it, and the sailors going about their work with cheerful countenances; for this northward course made us all feel that we were really and truly homeward bound at last.

It was thought that our passage would be a smart one, as good a run as any on record, for though, to be sure, we had been detained a bit off the Horn by the frequent heaving to of the ship, yet we had traversed the long stretch of the South Pacific very briskly, whilst for a long eight days now there blew a strong, steady beam wind that drove us through it at an average of two hundred

and fifty miles in the twenty-four hours. With less weight in the breeze we should have done better still. We could never show more than a main-top-gallant sail to it, and the high seas were by no means helpful to the heels of the ship. Yet Cape Horn was speedily a long way astern of us; the horrible weather of it was forgotten as pain is. Every night, stars which had become familiar to us were sinking in the south, and new constellations soaring out of the horizon over the bows. It was delightful to handle the ropes, and find them supple as coir instead of stiff as iron bars, to pick up the sails, and feel them soft again to the touch instead of that hardness of sheets of steel which they gathered to them in the frosty parallels. The sun shone with a warmth that was every day increasing in ardency; the dry decks sparkled crisply like the white firm sand of the sea-beach. The live-stock grew gay and hearty with the Atlantic temperature: the cocks crew cheerily, the hens cackled with vigour, the sheep bleated with voices which filled our salted, weather-toughened heads with visions of green meadows, of fields enamelled with daisies, of hedges full of nosegays, and of twinkling green branches melodious with birds.

We slipped into the south-east trade wind, and bore away for the equator under fore-topmast studding-sail.

"I . . . SAT RIDING A-COCK-HORSE OF IT" (p. 231).

One moonlight night a fancy to view the ship from the bowsprit entered my mind. I went on to the forecastle and crawled out on to the jib-boom, and there sat riding a-cock-horse of it, holding by the outer jib-stay. The moon shone brightly over the main-topsail yard-arm; all sail was on the ship, and she was leaning over from the fresh breeze like a yacht in a racing match. The moonlight made her decks resemble ivory, and stars of silver glory sparkled fitfully along them in the glass and brass work. The whole figure of the noble fabric seemed to be rushing at me; the foam poured like steam from her stem that was smoking and sheering through the ocean surge. Over my head soared the great jibs, like the wings of some mighty spirit. My heart leapt up in me to the rise and fall of the spar that I jockeyed. It was like sitting at one end of a leviathan see-saw, and every upheaval was as exhilarating as a flight through the air. Ah, thought I, as I leisurely made my way inboards, if sailoring were always as pleasant as *this*, I believe I should wish to continue at sea all my life.

It was two days afterwards, at about half-past six in the morning watch, that a fellow in the fore-top hailed the deck and reported a black object on the lee-bow which, he said, didn't look like a ship, though it was a deal too big for a long-boat. I was staring wistfully in the direction the man

had indicated. Mr. Johnson noticed this, and said, with a kind smile (I seemed to be a favourite of his, maybe because I was but a little chap to be at sea, otherwise I do not know what particularly entitled me to his kindness)—

"Here, Rockafellar, take my glass into the fore-top, and see what you can make of the object."

I was very proud of this commission, and not a little pleased to escape even for a short spell the grimy, prosaic business of scrubbing the poop. The telescope was a handsome instrument in a case, the strap of which I threw over my shoulder; and, slipping on a pair of shoes (for I never could endure the pressure of the rattlines against the soles of my naked feet), I got into the shrouds and arrived in the fore-top.

"Where is it?" said I to a man who stood peering seawards, with a hairy tar-stained hand protecting his eyes.

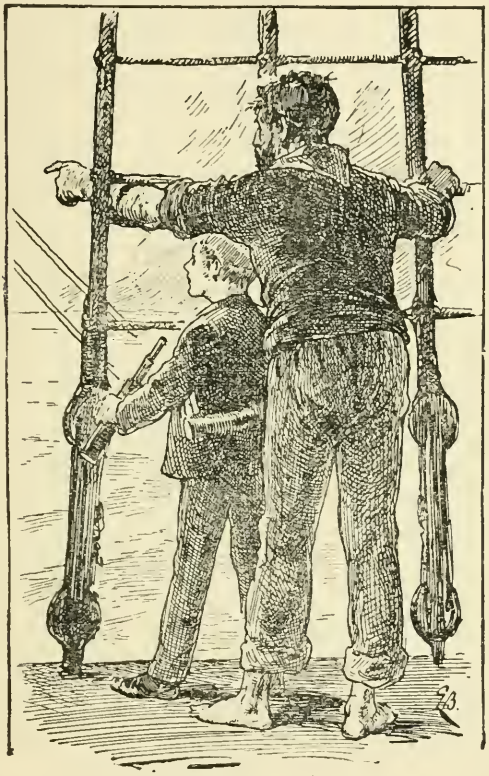
He pointed.

I levelled the glass, and in an instant beheld the black hull of a ship lying deep in the water, rolling heavily, yet very sluggishly. All three masts were gone, and a few splinters forking out between her knight-heads were all that remained of her bowsprit.

The sailor asked leave to look, and putting his eye to the telescope, exclaimed—

"*Here's* a bad job, I lay. She's a settling down

too. She'll be out of sight under water afore we're abreast, or I'm a Kanaka," by which he meant a South Sea Islander.



"HE POINTED."

I made my way to the deck, and reported what I had seen to the chief mate. It was not twenty

minutes after this when a loud cry arose from the forecastle, followed by a rush of men to the rail, to see what the fellow who had called out was pointing at. We of the poop, forgetting the ship's discipline in the excitement raised by the shout and headlong hurry of men forward, ran to the side to look also, and we saw close against the lee-bow of the ship, fast sliding along past the side, the figure of a man in a lifebuoy. He was naked to the waist; his arms overhung the circle, but his form, leaning forward, had so tilted the buoy that his head lay under water. He rose and fell upon the seas, which sometimes threw him a little way out and then submerged him again, with his long hair streaming like grass at the bottom of a shallow running stream.

The sailors along the waist and on the forecastle were looking aft, as though they expected that the mate would back the topsail yard and send a boat; but the man that had gone past was dead as dead can be: even my young eyes could have told *that*, though his head had been above water all the time.

"It is a recent wreck, I expect, sir," I heard Mr. Johnson say to the captain, who stepped on deck at that moment. "The poor fellow didn't look to have been in the water long."

"There was no doubt he was a corpse?" inquired the captain, to whose sight the form of the drowned man was invisible, so rapidly had it veered astern

into the troubled and concealing foam of our wake.

"Oh yes, sir," answered Mr. Johnson. "His face only lifted now and again."

At eight bells the wreck was in sight from the poop, but at a long distance. I went below to get some breakfast, and then returned, too much interested in the object that had hove into view to stay in the cabin, though I had been on deck since four o'clock, and had scarcely slept more than two hours during the middle watch.

Our ship's helm had been slightly shifted, so that we might pass the wreck close. As we advanced, fragments of the torn and mutilated fabric passed us; portions of yards, of broken masts with the attached gear snaking out from it, casks, hatch-covers, and so forth. It was easy to guess, by the look of these things, that they had been wrenched from the hull by a hurricane. I noticed a length of sail-cloth attached to a yard, with a knot in it so tied that I did not need to have been at sea many months to guess that nothing could have done it but some furious ocean blast.

We all stood looking with eagerness towards the wreck—the ladies with opera-glasses to their eyes, the gentlemen with telescopes; the captain aft was constantly viewing her through his glass, and the second mate, who had charge of the deck, watched her through the shrouds of the main rigging with

the intentness of a pirate whose eyes are upon a chase.

The fact was, it was impossible to tell whether there might be human beings aboard of her, let alone the sort of pathetic interest one found in the sight of the lonely object rolling out yonder in a drowning way amidst the sparkling morning waters of the blue immensity of the deep. Only a little while ago, I thought to myself as I surveyed her, she was a noble ship ; her white sails soared, she sat like a large summer cloud upon the water, the foam sparkled at her forefoot ; like ourselves, she might have been homeward bound—and now see her ! Hearts which were lately beating in full life, are silent—stilled for ever in those cold depths upon whose surface she is heaving.

There is no object in life, I think, that appeals more solemnly to the mind than a wreck fallen in with far out at sea. She is an image of death, and the thought of the eternity that follows upon death is symbolized by the secret green profound in whose depths she will shortly be swallowed up.

The hull lay so deep in the water that the name under her counter was buried, and not to be read. A flash of light broke from her wet black side each time she rolled from the sun, and the brilliant glare was so much like the crimson gleam of a gun, that again and again I would catch myself listening for the noise of the explosion, as though forsooth there were people firing signals to us aboard her.

"An eight hundred ton ship at least," the captain told the ladies, "and a very fine model. Oh yes! She's been hammered to pieces by a storm of wind. She has no boats, you see, so let us hope her people managed to get away in safety, and that they are by this time on board a ship."

"I daresay," said a young fellow, one of the cuddy passengers, "that her hold is full of valuable goods. Pity we couldn't take her in tow and carry her home with us. Why shouldn't the cargo of such a vessel as that be worth—call it twenty thousand pounds if you will? There's just money enough in that figure to make me tolerably comfortable for the rest of my life. Confounded nonsense to have a fortune under your nose, and be obliged to watch it sink!"

"Well, Mr. Graham," said the captain, laughing, "there's the hulk, sir. If you have a mind to take charge of her, I'll put you on board. Nothing venture nothing have, you know. That's particu larly the case at sea."

"Too late! too late!" growled out the bass voice of an old major who had been making the tour of the world for his health. "*See there!*" and he pointed a long, skinny, trembling forefinger at the wreck.

She was sinking as he spoke! It was as wild a sight in its way as you could conceive; she put her bow under and lifted her stern, and made her last

dive as though she were something living. She disappeared swiftly; indeed the ocean was rolling clear to the horizon before you could realise that the substantial object, which a moment or two before was floating firm to your sight, was gone.

The young gentleman named Graham shuddered as he turned away.

It was an hour after this that one of the midshipmen came into our berth, and said that a ship's boat had been made out right ahead. Nothing living in her had as yet been distinguished.

"The notion of course is," said he, "that she belonged to the wreck that we passed this morning."

I was reading in my bunk, but on hearing this, I immediately hopped out and went on deck. There was more excitement now than before. A crowd of the passengers were staring from the poop, with knots of steerage folks and a huddle of the ship's idlers on the forecastle, craning their necks under the bowsprit and past the jibs to get a view. Indeed, whilst the midshipmen had been telling us about this boat below, a glimpse had been caught of something moving over the low gunwale of her —some said it was a cap that had been waved; but whatever it was it had not shown again. However, everybody was now sure that there was something alive in the boat, and we all seemed to hold our breath whilst we waited. It was an ordinary ship's quarter-boat painted white.

"There again!" shouted somebody. "Did you see it? A man's head it looked like."

"Ay," said the second mate, who had his telescope bearing on the boat at the moment: "a head, and no mistake; but of what kind, though? More like a cocoa-nut, to my fancy, than a man's nob."

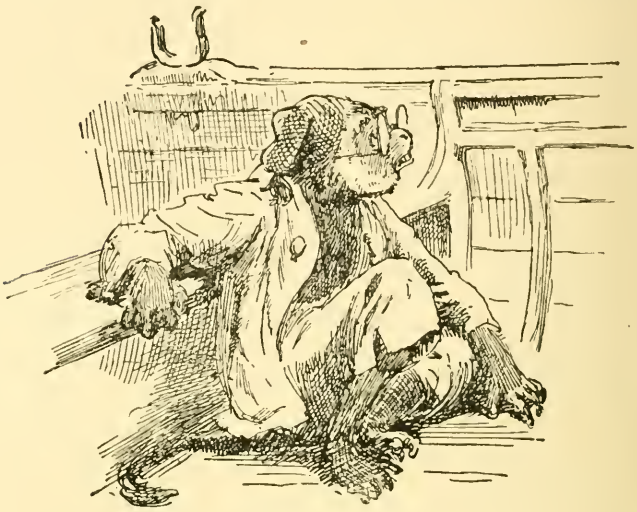
"There he is! there's the poor creature!" cried a lady in a sort of shriek, with an opera-glass at her eyes. "He's standing up—he has fallen backwards—ah! he's up again. But, oh dear me!—can it be a man?"

"With a tail!" said the second mate, who continued to ogle the boat through his telescope. "Bless my heart!—why—why—captain, I believe it's a great monkey!"

In a few minutes the boat was under the bow, and a strange roar of mingled wonder and laughter came floating aft to us from the crowd on the forecastle. It was a monkey, as the second mate had said—a big ape, with strong white whiskers, which ringed the lower part of his face like wool. He had evidently been some crew's pet; a small velvet cap with a yellow tassel, like a smoking cap, was secured to his head; he also wore a pair of large spectacles apparently cut out of thin white wood. His body was clothed in a short jacket of some faded reddish material, with a slit behind for the convenience of his tail, the end of which was raw, as though he had been lately breakfasting off it.

His legs were cased in their native hair, which was long, something like a goat's.

One could see that the poor beast was terribly weak. He would climb up on a thwart, then fall backwards, and, as his boat slipped past, he lay on his side looking up at us through his spectacles



"IT WAS A MONKEY."

with the most woebegone, piteous, grinning face of appeal that ever monkey in this world assumed.

There was a sudden explosion of laughter from amongst us; no man could help himself. Indeed, the first sight of the boat had put some fancies of horrors to be disclosed into our heads, and the

change, from our notion of beholding dead or dying human beings, into this apparition of a huge monkey in a smoking cap and spectacles, was so violent and ridiculous a surprise that it proved too much for the gravest amongst the crowd aft.

"Hands to the topsail braces!" bawled the captain; "lay the maintopsail to the mast. We must pick the poor brute up."

The *Lady Violet* was brought to a stand. Five men in charge of the second mate sprang into a lee-quarter boat; the tackles were slacked away, and in a few minutes our boat was alongside the other, with two of the fellows handing out the monkey, that lay as quiet as a baby in their arms.

Everybody crowded on to the main-deck to get a view of the poor beast when the boat had brought him alongside. He had the look of an old man; and though you saw that the unhappy animal was suffering, his grimaces were so ugly, the appeal of his bloodshot eyes through his spectacles so ludicrously human-like, that he made you laugh the louder at him somehow or other for the very pity that he excited in you.

"Get him water and food, lads, some of you," cried the second mate from the poop; "treat him as though he were mortal like yourselves. He'll take all ye'll give him and more than he ought to have; and we haven't saved him to perish of a bust-up."

He was carried to the forecastle followed by a

crowd of sailors and steerage people, and I lost sight of him, though I hung about, boy-like, for a bit, hoping they would bring him forth presently. However, it seemed that after the seamen had given him a drink of water and a couple of biscuits to eat, they took off his cap and spectacles and put him into a hammock with a blanket up to his throat, where he lay like a human being, rolling a languishing eye round upon those who looked at him, until he fell asleep.

The name *Dolphin*, Boston, was painted in the stern-sheets of the boat in which the monkey was, and of course it was supposed, fore and aft, that that was the name of the wreck we had fallen in with. But I afterwards heard—when I had been home some months—that the hull we had seen founder was a large English barque called the *Elijah Gorman*, whilst the boat from which we had taken the monkey had belonged to the Yankee craft whose name was on her. How the boat happened to have been adrift, and how her sole occupant should have been a monkey, I never could get to hear, though my father made many inquiries, being much interested in my story of this little affair. The crew of the *Elijah Gorman* had been taken off by a steamer bound to England from a South American port ; so full particulars concerning her loss had been published in the newspapers some time before we arrived in the Thames.

CHAPTER XI.

HE SEES A STRANGE LIGHT.

WELL, the sailors made a great pet of this immense monkey, who proved a very inoffensive, gentle, well-tamed creature, abounding in such tricks as a rough forecastle would educate a monkey in. The Jacks tried him with a pipe of tobacco, and he was observed to take several whiffs with an air of great relish, though he put the pipe down long before the bowl was empty. Once, seeing a man shaving, he imitated the fellow to such perfection as to show that he had been taught to feign to handle a razor; whereupon the carpenter shaped a piece of wood to resemble a razor, with which the monkey, whenever he was asked, would shave himself, pretending to lather his beard, after, with his own hands, putting a little bit of canvas under his chin. The sailors also discovered that the creature could play the fiddle—that is to say, if you put two sticks in his hand and told him to fiddle, he would adjust one of them to his shoulder, and saw away with

the other, making the most horrible faces the while, as though ravished by the exquisite sounds he was producing.

Again and again would I stand watching him till the tears flowed from my eyes. The sailors called him Old Jacob, dimly conceiving that was a good name for anything with a white beard. But alas! the ocean had marked him for her own, and poor Old Jacob did not live to see land again. His death was very tragical, and the manner in which I was startled by it leaves the incident, to this moment, very clear in my memory.

We had run out of the north-east trades, and were sweeping along over a high sea before a strong breeze of wind. We had met with a bothersome spell of baffling weather north of the equator, and the captain was now "cracking on," as the term goes, to make up for lost time, carrying a main-royal, when, at an earlier season, he would have been satisfied with a furled top-gallant sail, and through it the *Lady Violet* was thundering with foam to the hawse-pipe, the weather-clew of her mainsail up, and the foretop-mast stay-sail and jibs flapping and banging in the air over the forecastle, where they were becalmed by the forecourse and topsail.

There was a sailor at work on the rigging low down on the foreshrouds. I had been watching him for some minutes, observing the carelessness

"WOULD SHAVE HIMSELF."

of his pose as he stood poised on a rattline, whilst I thought how utterly hopeless would be the look-out of a man who should fall overboard into the white smother roaring alongside ; and I turned my back to walk aft, when I heard a loud cry of "Man overboard !"

I looked ; the fellow I had been watching had disappeared ! I rushed to the side and saw poor Old Jacob skimming along astern ! He had his spectacles and his cap on, and he was swimming like a man, striking out with vigour. He swept to the height of a sea, and his poor white-whiskered face most tragically comical with its spectacles stood out clear as a cameo for a breath, ere it vanished in the hollow. It then disappeared for good.

I glanced forward again and perceived the man whom I thought had fallen into the sea climbing out of the forechains to the part of the rigging where he had been at work.

The mate, coming forward, cried, "Who was it that sang out *man overboard?*"

"I did, sir," answered the sailor.

"Step aft!" said the mate.

The fellow dropped on to the deck and approached the officer.

"What do you mean," cried the mate in a passion, "by raising over a monkey such an alarm as *man overboard ?*"

"I thought it was a man, sir," answered the sailor. "I had caught sight of him on the jibboom, and believed it was Bill Heenan."

"What!" shouted the mate, "with those spectacles on?"

"I didn't notice the spectacles, sir," said the man; "I see a figure out on the jibboom, and whilst I was looking the jib-sheet chucked him overboard, and that's why I sung out."

The mate stared hard at the man, but seemed to think he was telling the truth, on which he told him to go forward and get on with his work, biting his underlip to conceal an expression of laughter, as he walked towards the wheel.

That evening, in the second dog-watch, there was a fight between the sailor, whose name was Jim Honeyball, and Bill Heenan. Bill had heard that Jim had mistaken him for Old Jacob, and had told the mate so; and thereupon challenged him to stand up like a man. There was a deal of pummeling, much rolling about, encouraging cheers from the sailors, and "language," as it is called, on the part of the combatants; but neither was much hurt.

Such was the end of the poor monkey; yet he seemed to have found a successor in Bill Heenan, for, to the end of the voyage, the Irishman was always called Old Jacob.

We were talking in the midshipmen's berth over

the loss of the monkey, when Poole, the long midshipman, who was in my watch, spun us the following yarn :—"I made my first voyage," said he, "in a ship called the *Sweepstakes*, to Madras, Calcutta, and Hong Kong. On our way home we brought up off Singapore for a day on some business of cargo, of which I forget the nature. I was standing at the gangway, my duty as midshipman being to keep the ship's side clear of loafers, when I saw a large boat heading for us. She was like one of those surf-boats you see at Madras. There were five fellows rowing her, and one chap steered with a long oar. They were all darkies, naked to the waist. I was struck by the manner in which one of them, as the boat approached, looked over the shoulder at our ship. The others kept their eyes on their oars or gazed over the stern ; but this chap stared continuously behind him as the boat advanced ; by which I mean that he looked ahead, for of course a fellow rows with his back upon the bow of a boat. They came alongside, and I found that the men had a great number of monkeys to sell. I looked hard at the fellow whose chin had been upon his shoulder as he rowed, and was wondering what on earth sort of native he was, when, on a sudden, I caught sight of his tail! He was a huge ape, of the size of a man—at all events, of the size of his shipmates. He so much resembled the others at a little distance that there

was nothing wonderful in my not having distinguished him quickly. He had pulled his oar with fine precision, keeping time like one of the University Eight, and there had been nothing odd about him at all, saving his manner of looking over his shoulder. The others held up monkeys to show us, and, I tell you, I burst into a roar of laughter when I saw this great ape pick up a bit of a marmozette and flourish it up at me as if he would have me buy. In a very little while the ship was full of monkeys. Almost every man amongst us bought one. I chose a pretty little creature that slept in the clews of my hammock all the way home ; but he grew so tall and quarrelsome that my mother, when I was absent last year, gave him away to an old gentleman, who shortly afterwards, in the most mysterious manner, disappeared, together with the monkey."

"Where wath the mythtery?" asked Kennett.

"Well," said Poole, "the notion was that the monkey had eaten up the old gentleman, dressed himself up in his clothes, and gone to London to consult a solicitor, with a view of contesting the old man's will, as being next of kin."

We were gradually now drawing near home. The English Channel was no longer so far off but that we could think of it as something within reach of us. All my clothes had shrunk upon me, whence I might know that I had grown much

taller and broader than I was when I left England. My face was dark with weather, the palms of my hands hard as horn with pulling and hauling. I had the deep-sea rolling gait that is peculiar to sailors, and, indeed, I had been transformed during the months I had been away into as thorough a little "shellback" as was ever made of a boy by old ocean. I was wonderfully hearty besides—had the appetite of a wolf and the spirits of a young spaniel. I was equal to doing "my bit" on board ship, whatever might be the job I was set to. I could put as neat a bunt to the furl of the mizzen-royal as any lad aboard, knew how to send the yard down, how to pass an earing—though I was too small, and without sufficient strength, to jockey the yard-arm in reefing—was well acquainted with all the parts of the rigging, and the various uses of the complicated gear; could steer, make knots of twenty different kinds—in short, I had picked up a great deal of sea knowledge of a working sort; but I knew nothing of navigation beyond the art of bringing the sun down to the horizon through a sextant, and working out a simple proposition of latitude, for which I had to thank Mr. Cock; Captain Tempest taught me nothing.

I was very eager to get home; I had never before been so long absent from my parents. I was pining, too, for comforts which when at home I had made nothing of, but which I would now

think upon as the highest luxuries. How often when hacking with a black-handled knife at a piece of iron-hard salt junk and rapping the table with a biscuit to free the mouthful of any stray weevil which might be lurking in the honeycombed fragment—how often, I say, has the vision of my father's table arisen before my eyes: the basin of soup at which I have known myself to sometimes impatiently turn up my nose; the fried sole or delicious morsel of salmon; the roast leg of mutton or sirloin of beef, with its attendant vegetables—things not to be dreamt of at sea—the jam tarts, the apple pies, the custards, not to mention the dessert! Oh, how often has the lump of cold salt fat pork or the mouthful of nauseous soup and bouilli come near to choking me with those thoughts of breakfast, dinner, and supper at home, which the odious nature of the food on our cabin table has excited in my hungry imagination!

After we had crossed the parallels of the Horse Latitudes, as they are called, we met with some strange weather: thick skies with a look of smoke hanging about the horizon, sometimes the sun showing as a shapeless oozing, like a rotten orange, a dusky green swell rolling up out of two or three quarters at once, as it seemed, and shouldering one another into a jumble of liquid hills which strained the ship severely with rolling, making every tree-nail, bolt, and strong fastening cry aloud with a

voice of its own, whilst the masts were so wrung that you would have expected them any minute to snap and fall away overboard.

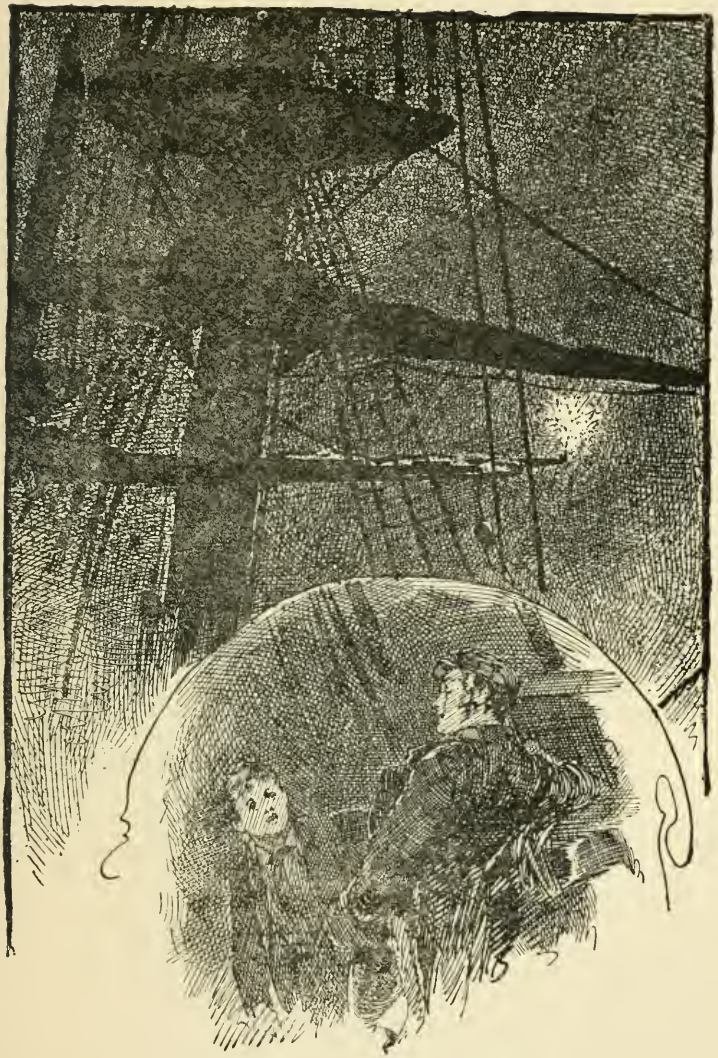
Some of our passengers whom the mountainous seas of the Horn had not in the least degree affected were now sea-sick; in fact, I heard of one lady as lying below dangerously ill with nausea. The men declared it made them feel squeamish to go aloft. I should have laughed at this in such salt toughened Jacks as they but for an experience of my own; for being sent to loose the mizen top-gallant sail, I was so oppressed with nausea on my arrival at the cross-trees, that it was as much as I could do to get upon the yard and cast the gaskets adrift. This was owing to the monstrous inequalities of the ship's movements, to the swift jerks and staggering recoveries which seemed to displace one's very stomach in one; added to which was the close oppressive temperature, a thickness of atmosphere that corresponded well with the pease-soup-like appearance of the ocean, and that seemed to be explained by the sulphur-coloured, smoky sort of sky that ringed the horizon.

It was on this same day, or rather in the night of it, during the first watch, from eight o'clock to midnight, that a strange thing happened. It was very dark, so black indeed that though you stood shoulder to shoulder with a man you could see nothing of him. There was no wind, but a heavy

swell was running on whose murky, invisible coils the ship was violently rolling. There was not a break of faintness, not the minutest spot of light in the sky, whose countenance, with a scowl of thunder upon it, seemed to press close to our wildly sheering mastheads.

There was something so subduing in the impenetrable gloom, something that lay with so heavy a weight upon the spirits, that the noisiest amongst us insensibly softened his voice to a whisper when he had occasion to speak. I particularly noticed this when some of the watch came aft to clew up the main topgallant sail and snug the main sail with its gear; there was no singing out at the ropes; instead of the hoarse peculiar songs sailors are wont to deliver when they drag, the men pulled silently as ghosts, and not a syllable fell from them that was audible to us when they were upon the yard rolling the sail up.

I was holding on to a belaying pin to steady myself when there suddenly shone out a light upon the boom iron at the extremity of the main-yard. It was of a greenish hue, sickly somewhat, so as to make one think of a corpse-candle or a graveyard Jack-o'-lantern. It swayed as a bladder would or as a soap-bubble might ere it soars from the pipe out of which it is blown. It had some power of illuminating in spite of its wan complexion, for I observed that it threw a very feeble light



"SUDDENLY SHONE OUT A LIGHT."

upon the clew of the sail, and that, as the ship rolled the yard-arm on which it shone towards the sea, the huge, round, ebony black swell mirrored it in the shape of a dull star like a phosphoric jelly-fish.

I had never seen such a sight before, nor indeed had I ever heard of the like of such a thing. I was standing close to Poole at the time, and he said to me—

"What do you think it?"

"Why, but what *is* it?" I responded.

"A spirit of the sea!" he exclaimed in a sepulchral voice; "the ghost of a dead sailor who has grown tired with flying and is resting himself on the yard-arm. The souls of dead seamen always carry lanterns with them to show them the road on dark nights after this pattern."

As he spoke the fiery exhalation disappeared.

"Ha! he's started again!" cried Poole. "He'll meet with another ship presently and take another spell of rest."

"A very good explanation, Mr. Poole," exclaimed the voice of the mate, "but not strictly scientific, sir."

He had been standing within earshot of us, yet was utterly indistinguishable in the blackness.

"The light, Rockafellar," continued the officer, "is what is called by sailors a corposant. It is supposed that the points of iron on board a ship

kindle into a flame some quality of electricity in the air. I daresay it will show again in a minute. Yes, as I thought. . . . It is on the topsail yard-arm now."

CHAPTER XII.

HE ARRIVES HOME.

He had scarcely uttered these words when a shock ran through the ship for all the world as though the heave of the swell had let her fall with violence upon some hard shoal. The decks trembled as though to an explosion. The tremor of the fabric seemed to enter into one's very marrow, and it would be impossible to express the sense of dismay it excited, happening as it did on a black night, and in the middle of the wide ocean where we knew there could be no shoals for hundreds of leagues.

The light at the yard-arm vanished; there was a noise of hurrying feet forwards, with a rumbling of exclamations uttered in agitation.

"What was that?" was shouted from the companion-hatch in the captain's familiar accents "Mr. Johnson?"

"Sir?"

"What have we struck? Is there any ship near us?"

"I don't know, sir," answered the mate; "it has been as black as thunder all through."

"Get a cast of the lead," exclaimed the captain, but quietly, with no note of hurry in his voice; "send the carpenter aft to sound the pumps; get lanterns up to show a light over the side."

The blow felt as though the ship had struck some floating wreck. In a minute the vessel was wide awake. The shock had aroused the sleepers, who came tumbling up pell-mell out of cabin and forecastle. The decks, which before were of a death-like stillness, were now alive with sailors running about, with passengers full of excitement and fear, with lanterns briskly travelling from place to place, with one stationary one at the pumps, where the white-haired carpenter stood lowering his sounding-rod, with the deliberation of a Scotchman, down the well.

There was nothing to be seen over the side, and there was no more water in the bottom of the ship than was always to be found there. The sea was sounded all around with the hand-lead, but, as will readily be supposed, no bottom was got.

In the midst of this commotion the heavens seemed to be split open by a flash of lightning; the whole surface of the ocean shone out to its farthest confines to the crimson blaze, and then

came, within three seconds of the terrific glare, a crash of thunder right overhead. The enormous explosion liberated the rain ; down it came, a very Niagara Falls of water ! In a trice it was up to a man's knees in the main-deck, and every mother's son of us was as a drowned rat, soaked through and through ; the passengers rushing headlong to the hatches, and the sailors floundering about here and there to the hurried cries of the mate ordering sail to be shortened.

There was no more lightning, but the rain continued to fall in a living sheet of water, which flashed the fire up out of the sea all about us. Indeed, the black atmosphere was extraordinarily full of electricity, and even through the blinding veil of the rain you could catch a sight of bluish sparks glittering about the ironwork, with the coming and going of nebulous lights upon the yard-arms and bow-sprit. The ship was snugged down, but the furling of the wet and beating canvas was hard work. You could not see an inch before your face. I had to grope my way on to the mizzen topsail yard as a man might through a small tunnel in the bottom of a pyramid. The foot-ropes were as slippery as ice, and as my legs were very short my situation was one of real danger, not more due to the sickening rolling and strong beating of the heavy saturated canvas than to the circumstance of Poole being

alongside of me—by which I mean that his long legs, like a pair of compasses, weighed down the foot-rope upon which we were standing into an angle down which I would slide, until my feet were off the line, and there was nothing to save me from going overboard but my grip of the jack-stay.

All the while that we were working we expected the mass of impenetrable shadow that hung over our heads, dark as the midnight inkiness of a vault, to burst into a roaring gale of wind; yet all remained quiet; the rain ceased; saving the straining noises of the rolling ship there was nothing to be heard but the sobbing of water cascading off the decks overboard through the scupper holes. No more shocks were felt, though I fancy the nerves of us all continued on the strain in expectation of such another thump as that which had sent the people below running up in terror through the hatches.

At midnight it was still a thick black calm, and the same high swell working that had been running throughout the watch. I was not a little rejoiced to hear the chimes of the bell, for I had been soaked by the downfall to the very marrow, yet durst not leave the deck for a minute to change my wet clothes for dry ones. We turned in dog-tired, and slept without a stir throughout the four hours; and when we were called again at four

o'clock the stars were shining, the moon was setting in the west, a fresh breeze was blowing over our starboard quarter, and the *Lady Violet* was once more driving through it on her way home under canvas that clothed her from truck to waterway.

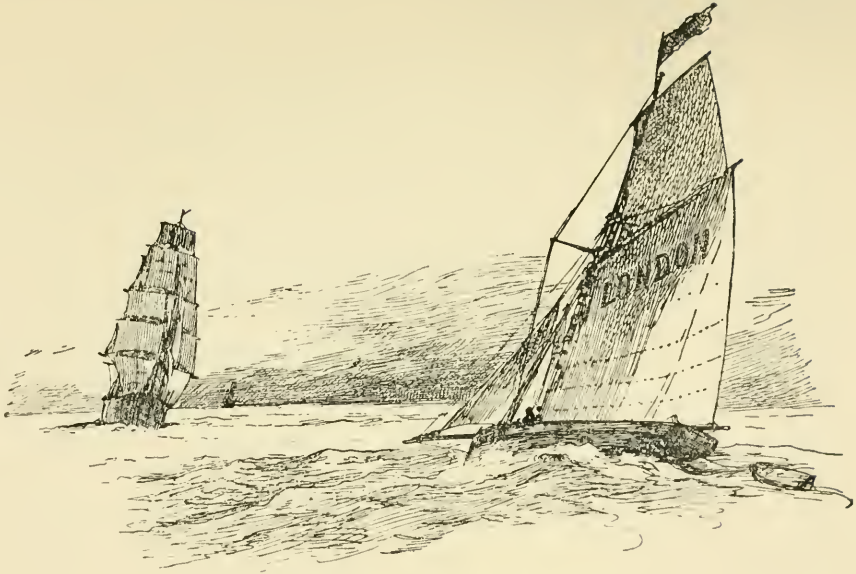
What it was that we had struck or that had struck us could only be a matter of conjecture. The captain was of opinion that the shock had been caused by a submarine earthquake—a volcanic explosion deep down. "It was the right sort of night," he argued, "for disturbances of that kind; the water full of fire, and the atmosphere tingling with electricity." On the other hand, Mr. Johnson had no doubt that the ship had received a blow from the rising of a whale under her keel. The creature had risen to spout, but had been frightened by the thump it had given itself and made off.

It was a thing, as I had said, that one could only speculate upon. The ship was divided into two parties, one accepting the captain's and the other the mate's opinion. Which side I declared for I do not remember; but on recurring to the incident at this distance of time, I have no doubt whatever that the mate was in the right, for since those days I have been on board a ship where an earthquake has happened in the deep sea beneath her, and the sort of vibratory scraping sensation that accompanied the shock was entirely different from the

dull lumpish thud that had made every heart in the *Lady Violet* beat fast on that black night.

As we approached the entrance to the English Channel ships grew numerous, and every hour yielded us a fresh canvas of ocean panorama. At daybreak one morning we spied a large ship right ahead, and by four o'clock in the afternoon had approached her close enough to read the name upon her stern ; and great was our triumph when we discovered that she was the fine clipper ship *Owen Glendower*, that had left Sydney eight days before us. We passed her in the night, and the watch on deck let fly an ironical cheer at her, taking their chance of being heard, and at sunrise next morning nothing but her royal and topgallant sails were visible on the shining line of the horizon.

It was rather thick weather in the Channel, and we saw no land till we made the South Foreland. A fine cutter came thrashing through it to alongside of us when off Dungeness, and a pilot climbed out of her over our side. With what profound interest, and joy, and admiration did my young eyes explore his purple visage, and survey his stout coat and the warm shawl round his neck ! He had not been on board ten minutes when the sun shone forth, and the green and frothing waters of the Channel showed clear to the horizon. Then it was that the coast of our dear old home lay fair and beautiful upon our port beam and bow—white cliffs



"A FINE CUTTER CAME THRASHING THROUGH IT."

slopes of green sward, delicate as satin, groups of Liliputian houses, with windows sparkling, the chocolate-coloured canvas of smacks, the white wings of pleasure-yachts, the grimy cloths of round-bowed, black-hulled colliers, enriching the surface of the laughing seas betwixt us and the line of shingle upon which the surf was surging.

Off the South Foreland a tug chased and cleverly hooked us by making a short cut to the North Foreland, where she intercepted us as we swept round in a large, majestic arch, with the red-hulled lightship stationed abreast of Ramsgate resting like a spot of colour against the yellow shelf of the Goodwin Sands, on our port quarter, and a busy scene of shipping opening under our bows as we headed for the River Thames. But the shift of helm brought the wind ahead, and by this time our captain and the skipper of the tug, having agreed upon the question of terms for towage, the order was given to clew up and furl ; a line from the tug was hove to us, the end of a huge hawser attached to it and paid out over the bow, and presently the *Lady Violet*, in tow of the panting little steamer, was quietly gliding along for her home in the East India Docks, with her crew aloft sending down sails and unreeving gear.

News of our being in the Channel had reached my father long before we had arrived in the river, and he was one of the first to step on board

when we had been warped to our berth in the docks.

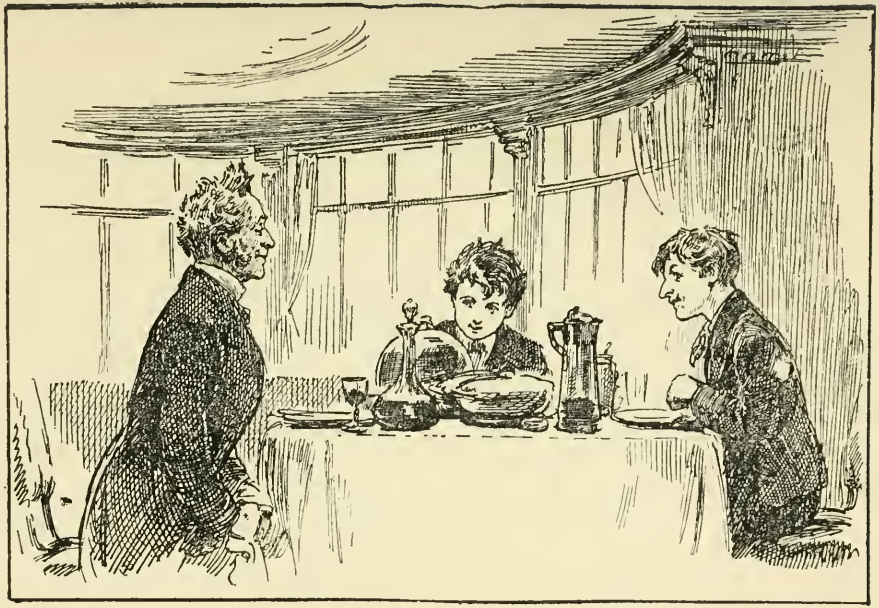
I was below, polishing myself up to go ashore, when Kennet called through the hatch that my father was on the quarter-deck and waiting to see me. I rushed up, and in a moment was in his arms. I had no objection to his kissing me now; in fact, I may say that I kissed him. The over-strained sense of manliness in me was gone. I was a young sailor with a full heart, and there were tears both in my father's and my own eyes as he drew away from me, after our first hug, to have a good look at me.

"The picture of health!—gracious, how sunburnt!—grown a whole foot, I do declare!—my goodness, Tommy, what shoulders!"

This, and the like, was all he could say for some time. I asked after my mother, my sisters, my little brother. Thank God, they were all well, and eagerly awaiting my arrival at home.

"I have ordered a jolly good dinner at the Brunswick Hotel," said my father; "let us go and partake of it, my son. But first you will say good-bye to the officers and your shipmates."

The captain was not to be seen. Mr. Johnson shook me cordially by the hand and assured my father that I had the making of a sailor in me. All the midshipmen had hurried ashore with the exception of Kennet, who was below, sitting on a



"WERE SEATED AT A TABLE."

chest smoking his pipe when I descended to say farewell to such of the lads as I could find in the cabin. He pretended to weep as he squeezed my hand.

I said, "Kennet, are you not going ashore?"

"Yeth," he said; "but I muth finith my pipe firtht."

"Kennet," I said, "come and dine with my father and me. He has ordered a good dinner to be in readiness for us at the Brunswick Hotel."

He threw down the sooty clay pipe he had been smoking and jumped up.

"Rockafellar," he said, "I alwayth thaid you were a brick!"

A little later, my father, Kennet, and myself were seated at a table, white with damask and sparkling with glass, in a window overlooking the Docks. Oh! the excellence of the roast beef! Oh! the sweetness of the cauliflower with its melted butter! Oh! the incomparable flavour of the mealy potatoes!

"Ithth the change from thalt horthe, thir, that maketh it nithe," said Kennet, with his mouth full.

And so ended Master Rockafellar's voyage. Would you like to know if I ever went to sea again? Well it is a question that need not signify just now. If this little yarn which I have been spinning has amused you, then, should you desire

more by-and-by, I don't doubt there is enough stuff stowed away in the locker of my memory to make plenty of "twisters," as stories are called at sea. Meanwhile, boys and girls, I touch the peak of my midshipman's cap to you in respectful farewell.

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